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JULY 12, 2004

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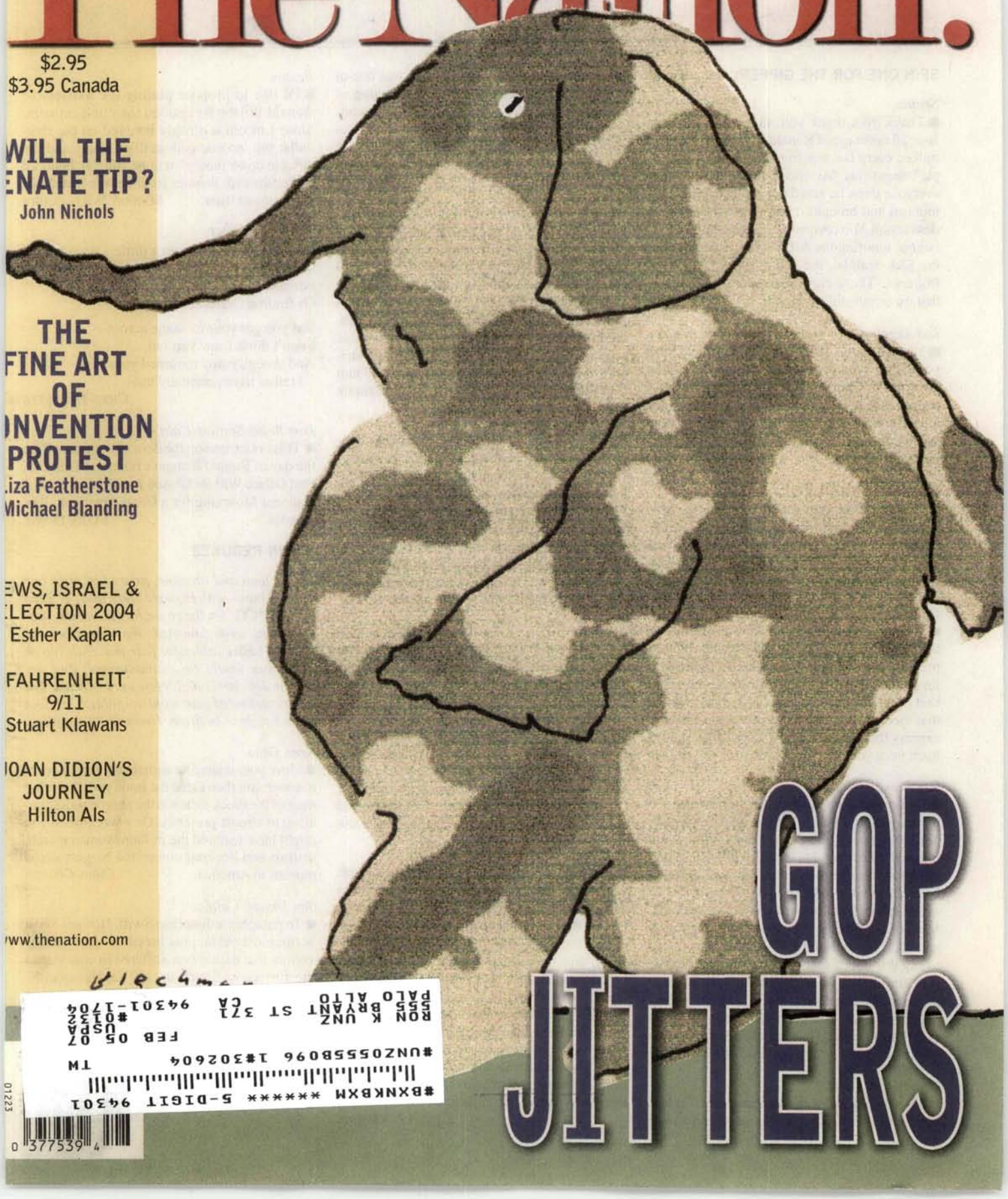

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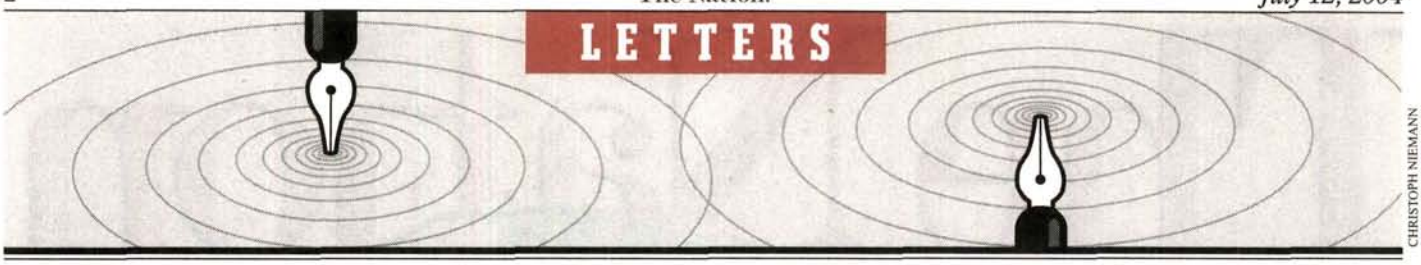

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

SPIN ONE FOR THE GIPPER

Seattle

■ Thank you, thank you, thank you for your June 28 coverage of Ronald Reagan. The media milked every last tear from "the American people" about this "American President," making everyone think he saved the country from communism and brought it back from the brink of destruction. You covered all my memories: Iran/-*contra*, ignoring the AIDS crisis, deregulation, the S&L scandal, the firing of air-traffic controllers... Those eight years were a nightmare that we are all still paying for. PENNY RIKER

Los Angeles

■ Your coverage of Reagan was excellent, and you didn't even get into the damage he did as governor of California or how much it cost the taxpayers to bury the bum. It is refreshing, after all the media glorification of this right-wing mediocrity and hypocrite, to encounter the plain, unvarnished truth. CHARLES B. EDELMAN

Hamden, Conn.

■ Thank you for your reality-based recapitulation of the Reagan presidency. Like Dorothy Parker's famous "tonstant reader," the recent orgy of propagandistic revisionism made me want to "frow up." EDWARD M. ROTHCHILD

Caparra, Puerto Rico

■ My congratulations for your brave editorial on the Reagan legacy, the first US medium to express an honest point of view about a figure who for us, the Latin Americans, did not represent the best of the American people. It is good to know that there are brave people who do not fear to express the truth. The *New York Times* should learn from you. ALBERTO RIERA FERRO

San Francisco

■ Before Ronald Reagan enters the beatification phase, it would behoove those taken in by the puffery put out by his Administration (those not indicted) to pay heed to what Tip O'Neill said in his book *Man of the House*: "Ronald Reagan lacked the knowledge he should have had in every sphere both domestic and international. Most of the time he was an actor reading lines who didn't understand his own programs. I hate to say this about such an agreeable man but it was sinful that Ronald Reagan ever became president." He went on to say, "I've known every president since Harry Truman and there's no question in my mind that Ronald Reagan was the worst." ARTHUR INERFIELD

Santa Cruz, Calif.

■ My feelings about the Reagan years: "It was *mourning* in America." California's Prop 13 had just passed and the country's mood was one of not taking responsibility. Rather than taking us to the woodshed for a lesson in that responsibility, Reagan gave us his dalliance with Rosy Scenario. His morning was more like evening. I see the Clinton years as the brilliant glow you get just as the sun sets. ALVIN HOWARD

Corte Madera, Calif.

■ My dad was a photographer at *Modern Screen* in the 1940s. He requested photo sessions with some stars who were in the armed forces, but they didn't want the publicity. Ronald Reagan, however, wished to be photographed on his front step, in full uniform, kissing his wife goodbye. Then he went to his desk job in Culver City. That makes him the Patriarch of the Chickenhawks. My dad loathed him ever after. BARBARA BREGER

Seattle

■ In 1940, Ronald Reagan starred as Brass Bancroft, secret service agent, in *Murder in the Air*. Brass's job was to keep enemy spies from stealing the plans to a new secret weapon, the Inertia Protector. Presumably, screenwriter Raymond Schrock based the weapon on Nikola Tesla's death ray particle accelerator. This reared its ugly head during the Reagan years—as SDI, or "Star Wars." Was Reagan already on board, having seen it in the movies? STEVE STUART

Munich

■ I believe that in the history books, Reagan will be most noted for one of the first acts of his Administration: the elimination of solar- and alternative-energy tax credits, in 1981. It is almost too painful to contemplate how much healthier and wealthier the world would be today if the remarkable momentum of the research and progress of the 1960s and '70s in these areas had been encouraged and supported instead of stopped nearly dead at the behest of the oil and auto industries. JOHN BROWNER

Boston

■ You omitted one salient fact: Ronald Reagan was responsible for creating the best marijuana in the world! When Reagan initiated his "war on drugs," the marijuana growers were hard pressed to beat the Feds. They had to re-engineer their plant, and they did so in one of the greatest breeding undertakings ever—no recombinant DNA, just conventional breeding technology. In a few years the marijuana plant was a dwarf plant that lacked the typical acrid odor, thereby allowing it to be grown indoors. Along with these changes came additional benefits—the best and most potent *sinsemilla* marijuana in the world. Bravo, Mr. President.

STEVEN ACKERMAN

Boston

■ I'd like to propose putting the likeness of Ronald Wilson Reagan on the one-cent coin. Since Lincoln is already honored on the five-dollar bill, no one gets shuffled aside, and the "trickle down theory" will be suitably honored and enshrined. Pennies from heaven instead of *E Pluribus Unum*. MURRAY WILLOUGHBY

Robbinsville, NJ

■ Your face could go on a dime
Or maybe a ten-dollar bill,
For gutting a union (a crime!)
Or finding Grenadans to kill.

But you got your message across—
I don't think I saw you fail.
And though many mourned your loss,
I'd rather have gotten my mail.

CHRIS LEGGETTE

Port Reyes Station, Calif.

■ This notice was on the door of our post office the day of Ronald Reagan's funeral: "This U.S. Post Office Will Be Closed June 11th, a Day of National Mourning for a Great American, Ray Charles." MARK DOWIE

STERN REBUKES

*Mail, clean and obscene, poured in after our May 17 issue, with Howard Stern and "F*cked by the F*CC" on the cover, hit the stands. Subscriptions were canceled, the magazine was kept off coffee tables for fear that children or neighbors would be contaminated, and we, author Jeff Jarvis and Stern were trashed. But others defended our right to publish it—and Stern's right to be Stern. Herewith, a sampling.*

Kent, Ohio

■ I love your magazine and usually read it cover to cover. But then came the issue with the smug mug of the shock jock and the puerile sensationalism of almost-profanity. On a week when you might have featured the million-woman march, instead you lionized one of the biggest sexist morons in America. CHRIS COTTON

San Dimas, Calif.

■ To paraphrase Jonathan Swift, Howard Stern is the most pernicious breed of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth. Jeff Jarvis notwithstanding, Stern is a sexist, a racist and, above all, a bully. His show is a hideous spectacle wherein Howard and his merry band of losers defecate on one another (metaphorically speaking, of course) when they are not abusing his guests. For me, however, the most disturbing thing about Stern is that he simply isn't funny.

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EDITORIALS

Lies...and Lies

Let's not be naïve. Presidents, like diplomats, at times go forth and lie for their country. But when they use lies, repeated over and over, to deceive their own people, democracy is at risk.

America recently went through a week of celebration of the life of Ronald Reagan—a celebration that itself was a kind of lie, since it left out any mention of Reagan's own lies during the Iran/*contra* crisis, which was a grave assault on the Constitution.

Now another ex-President, Bill Clinton, is back in the limelight flogging his bestselling book. Like Reagan, Clinton also misled the nation. But he was lying not on matters of war and peace, or subverting the Constitution, but about a private sexual affair—after being pursued by fanatical right-wing Republicans led by Kenneth Starr. (We don't condone Clinton's lies, but we found much more troubling his inaction on Rwanda, his unwillingness to stem increases in corporate power over the public sphere and his signature on the punitive GOP welfare "reform" bill.)

Also in the news, and more significant, have been the lies the Bush Administration fashioned to sell the invasion of Iraq. The lies about the (nonexistent) weapons of mass destruction and the (nonexistent) Iraqi nuclear threat have pretty well been exposed. Now the lies coming to light are about the (unproven) cooperation between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. A 9/11 commission staff report asserts that there is no evidence of a "collaborative relationship" between Iraq and Al Qaeda that might have justified a pre-emptive war. Here, as with their other Iraq fictions, Administration officials used deceptive claims and innuendo that could not be easily disproved. They made sure their phrasing created enough wiggle room that they could pretend they'd never meant to imply what they clearly meant to imply.

But there is little doubt that when George W. Bush claimed in September 2002, "You can't distinguish between Al Qaeda and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror," he was trying to mislead Americans into supporting a war on Iraq. He was also misleading us with his repeated references to Saddam's teaming up "with Al Qaeda–type organizations" and his warning that Saddam planned to employ Al Qaeda as a "forward army" against the West. Small wonder that Americans are now catching on to these and other dishonest claims. The latest ABC/*Washington Post* poll shows that 52 percent of Americans say the Iraq war wasn't worth fighting. Approval of Bush's campaign against terrorism has plunged twenty-nine points, and John Kerry is running neck and neck with Bush on who can be trusted to fight terrorism.

Again, when Vice President Cheney, on CNBC's *Capital Report*, denied three times that he had claimed there was a meeting in Prague in April 2001 between 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta and the head of Iraqi intelligence, he was unambiguously lying. The transcript of NBC's December 9, 2001, *Meet the Press* broadcast has Cheney making exactly that false claim. It was certainly not his first lie to justify the Administration's Iraq adventure, but it is impressive for its brazenness. The transcript of the program was available to anyone who cared to look.

So there are lies and there are *lies*. Reagan's lies are now largely a matter for the historians (who must be given full access to his archive to expose them). Bill Clinton suffered the ultimate disgrace and apologized to the American people for lying to them.

The only expiation for George Bush's and Dick Cheney's lies is their removal from office in November.

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COMMENT

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'Embedded Patriots'

ELECTION MATTERS

The most intriguing story in Washington these days is a subterranean conflict that reporters cannot cover because some of them are involved. A potent guerrilla insurgency has formed in and around the Bush presidency—a revolt of old pros in government who strike from the shadows with devastating effect. They tell the truth. They explode big lies. They provide documentary evidence that undermines popular confidence in the Commander in Chief. They prod the media and the political community to ask penetrating questions of the Bush regime. Doubtless, these anonymous sources act from a mixture of motives—some noble, some self-interested—but in present circumstances one might think of them as "embedded patriots."

The business of leaks is an everyday thing in Washington and, arguably, the government could not function without them. It is a way to communicate official and unofficial information in a tentative fashion—nudging events in one direction or another without the need to take responsibility for what's communicated. Reporters participate enthusiastically in the traffic and call it "news." The process is sustained only because everyone can rely on the journalists' mock-heroic code of *omertà*: Never reveal the names of your secret sources—never—even if the revealed "information" turns out to be spurious.

But what has occurred during the past several months is not the normal commerce. A series of explosive leaks—closely held documents and well-informed tips—have altered the course of politics and might very well influence the outcome of this year's presidential election. Yet we don't know whom to thank. Who gave the Justice Department's "torture" memorandum to the *Washington Post*? Who provided the International Red Cross's letter of complaints on prisoner abuses to the *Wall Street Journal*? Who confirmed for the *New York Times* that Iyad Allawi, the newly appointed Prime Minister of Iraq, had supervised the CIA's terrorist bombing campaign in Baghdad a decade ago? Who informed *U.S. News & World Report* that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld had authorized the holding of a "ghost prisoner" in violation of international law? Who—someone close to the President?—leaked the "torture" memo written by White House counsel Alberto Gonzales?

We don't need to know the identities to grasp that these and other over-the-transom "communications" provided forceful and well-timed contradictions to the White House line. It is also obvious that these leaks could not have come from the lower depths of the bureaucracy. The material is too sensitive for wide distribution. Not to take anything away from aggressive reporters, but the leakers clearly targeted the *Post*, *Times* and *Journal* to achieve maximum impact on Washington. The messages are not from some office crank at the Xerox machine but had to originate among sophisticated and highly placed officers of government.

My own surmise—corroborated in conversations with several long-experienced Washington reporters—is that we are probably talking about career military officers and senior civil servants at the Pentagon, Justice Department lawyers and professionals at the CIA or State Department. In practice, sensitive documents are

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COMMENT

sometimes passed off laterally to former colleagues no longer in government who provide them to the chosen reporters. Some risk to one's career is required, but these are smart people who know how to cover their tracks. Oddly enough, the brutally buttoned-down Bush White House has not invoked the usual official whine about irresponsible leaks, perhaps because the evidence nailed them so forcefully (and there's probably more to come). Or maybe the White House is inhibited by the embarrassing fact that its staff faces a grand jury investigation over leaking the identity of CIA officer Valerie Plame (even the President has consulted his own lawyer).

Cynical readers may resist this explanation, but the motivations within the permanent government are most likely grounded in principle and patriotism, not narrow partisanship. Among bureaucrats, there is always a current of low-level grumbling about the elected leadership, but career civil servants and military rarely take such provocative countermeasures. In this Administration, the level of disgust and alarm is more palpable because Bush has been willing to trash the accepted norms of behavior and to cross perilous thresholds, unaware of the dangers despite many warnings from the professionals. To people who will be in government long after Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld have departed, the Bush crowd looks like the worst possible combination of qualities—it is both incompetent and ruthless.

"It's a wonderful country in a way," Walter Pincus, the *Post*'s veteran investigative reporter, observes. "People in the government community are really concerned about what can happen. They get upset with themselves when they see things going wrong. So they are willing to raise questions. But I also think for some the failure to stand up before the war started is emboldening them now." The concerns of these anonymous truth-tellers were confirmed in public by the powerful statement issued recently by retired diplomats and military leaders, virtually calling for Bush's defeat this fall. "We need a change," they declared. The list of signers was striking because it was top-heavy with Republican and conservative professionals: Reagan's ambassador to Moscow and his chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, George Bush Sr.'s ambassador to Israel and many others.

Whatever their intentions, the leakers have now raised the stakes for the country—posing grave implications that cannot be easily brushed aside. While Bush tries to explain away prisoner abuse in Iraq with the "few bad apples" argument, the White House, Pentagon and Justice Department memos justifying torture establish an official predicate for scandalous government actions that are more than embarrassing. Fundamentally, these are crimes—violations both of US law and of the Geneva Conventions, according to many legal experts. The President himself did not express alarm at these revelations. He turned aside questions as casually as his lieutenants dismissed the Constitution. Thus, an ominous warning light is now flashing for the Republic: the potential for criminal charges running far up the military chain of command, and for the lodging of impeachment charges against this President and for an international tribunal to examine American war crimes. The connecting facts are not yet visible to support these accusations, but a plausible outline for how they may be connected is well exposed. These matters, in other words, could lead to a constitutional crisis as momentous as Watergate, maybe more serious because the offenses are far more fundamental.

Did the President authorize illegal acts? Bad advice from his lawyers is not a defense. Did his Cabinet officers construct rationales to disobey long-settled law and common morality? We will not learn the answers unless responsible, independent investigations are initiated. Very few Americans may wish to go down that road, but the consequences of ignoring the warning light are far worse. The precedent of accepting lawless government and a corrupted constitutional order will lead inevitably to more of both.

WILLIAM GREIDER

Tyson's Moral Anchor

One of America's finest union leaders and her supporters are now under assault by one of the nation's meanest, toughest corporations. For years Maria Martinez, head of Teamsters Local 556 in Walla Walla, Washington, has been battling IBP, the meatpacking giant now owned by Tyson Foods. In 1999 Martinez helped launch a wildcat strike at IBP's beef slaughterhouse in Wallula, Washington, protesting safety hazards and excessive line speeds. In 2001 she helped workers there win a lawsuit against IBP for violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act, gaining as much as $7.3 million in back wages that the company still refuses to pay. She has fought not only for higher wages and better working conditions but also for food safety and animal welfare. With support from Teamsters for a Democratic Union (the progressive, reform-minded wing of the Teamsters), Martinez energized Local 556, reaching out to immigrant workers and linking them with college students, consumer activists and animal rights groups. In response, Tyson Foods has worked hard to get her kicked out of the plant, at one point prohibiting her from even setting foot on the premises. The type of immigrant/activist coalition that Martinez has built is crucial to the future success of the US labor movement—and that is one of the reasons Tyson is so eager to crush it.

CALVIN TRILLIN

CONCERNING NANNY DICK CHENEY'S CONTINUED STATEMENTS ABOUT IRAQ'S ROLE IN 9/11

The commission's report starts anew
Nanny's fairy tales, worthy of Pooh.
For the contrary facts that accrue
Can do nothing to change Cheney's view.
He believes, from what we can construe,
If you say it enough, then it's true.

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COMMENT

A generation ago, meatpacking workers earned some of the highest wages of any industrial workers in the United States. Working in a slaughterhouse was a hard, dirty job, but it provided a stable middle-class income. Today meatpacking is one of the lowest-paid industrial jobs, with one of the highest turnover rates. It is also the nation's most dangerous job, measured by the rate of serious injury. During the 1970s IBP was largely responsible for changing the industry's labor policies, breaking unions, slashing wages and recruiting an immigrant work force. In a very tough business, IBP gained the reputation of being by far the toughest. In 1974 IBP was convicted for collaborating with organized-crime figures in New York City to bribe meat wholesalers and union leaders. Any meatpacking company that hoped to compete with IBP had to cut wages and benefits, too. Over the past twenty-five years some wages in the meatpacking industry, adjusted for inflation, have declined by more than 50 percent.

When Tyson Foods bought IBP in 2001, many workers feared that the company would try to make wages in the beef industry similar to those in the poultry industry, where the pay is even lower. Those fears now seem to be justified. Tyson Foods is the largest meatpacking company the world has ever seen, supplying supermarkets and fast-food chains with beef, chicken and pork. The company's size and scale give it a tremendous advantage when trying to break a local union. In February 2003 members of the United Food and Commercial Workers at the Tyson plant in Jefferson, Wisconsin, went on strike to prevent cutbacks in wages, benefits and vacation time. Tyson promptly hired replacement workers and kept the plant running. After eleven months on the picket line, UFCW members voted to end the strike—but Tyson wouldn't rehire most of them. The National Labor Relations Board has ruled that the scabs can be considered permanent replacements, paving the way for Tyson to get the UFCW out of the plant completely. Workers at the Tyson plant in Cherokee, Iowa, now face similar demands for wage and benefit cuts. At a Tyson slaughterhouse in Brooks, Canada, sixty "team members" (Tyson's term for its employees) were recently fired after a protest against poor working conditions. The plant has no union, and "team members" are expected to work six days a week.

The turnover rate at the Tyson slaughterhouse in Wallula is high, and about 90 percent of the workers are immigrants, mainly from Latin America and Bosnia, who do not speak English. It isn't easy to maintain union solidarity among such a work force. In April Martinez narrowly defeated an attempt, sponsored by Tyson, to decertify her union in advance of contract negotiations. Local 556's contract expired on May 31. Workers are still employed under the terms of the old contract, but Tyson has stopped deducting union dues from their paychecks. Among other things, Martinez is demanding a safer workplace, a slower line speed, and much more careful handling of cattle, so that none are dismembered while still alive. Local 556 has also forged ties with consumer groups in Mexico, Korea and Japan, demanding that Tyson test all of its cattle for mad cow disease. The worldwide ban on American beef, imposed in December after the discovery of a heifer with mad cow disease in Washington State, threatens the livelihood of workers at the Tyson plant in Wallula, which used to ship as much as 40 percent of its meat to Asia.

Although mad cow disease has reduced Tyson's overseas sales, the company is hardly on the verge of bankruptcy. Tyson Foods' second-quarter revenue in 2004 was up 6.9 percent from the previous year, while profits increased by more than 65 percent. Some executive compensation has gone up as well. In 2003 the company chairman, John Tyson, was paid $20.9 million. At a time when the company was demanding wage and benefit cuts from impoverished meatpacking workers, John Tyson's annual compensation nearly tripled. His corporate perks attracted the attention of the Securities and Exchange Commission, which has launched a formal investigation. During an interview with Deborah Norville on May 26, Tyson outlined his personal theory of labor management. "One must have a moral compassion or a moral anchor," Tyson said. "You have to serve the people that work for you...and in effect become a servant to the people that work for you." He said it with a straight face.

ERIC SCHLOSSER

Eric Schlosser is the author of Fast Food Nation *and* Reefer Madness. *Readers who'd like to support the workers of Local 556 can send a tax-deductible donation to "Safe Work/Safe Food," c/o Teamsters Local 556, 1750 Portland Avenue, Walla Walla, WA 99362.*

NATION NOTES

Milton Glaser, a longtime friend of *The Nation* and the designer behind the "I ♥ NY" campaign, is back with a new idea: He proposes that New Yorkers welcome the GOP in August with a display of light. The plan, which he outlines on page 9, emerges from a desire to show anger at what the GOP and the Bush Administration have done to our city, our nation and the world, while avoiding violent confrontations that could help the GOP in November. We urge readers to spread the word about this bright, peaceful and creative protest against the darkness of the Bush agenda (go to lightupthesky.org to download or e-mail; link at www.thenation.com), and we hope those in the New York area will help light up the sky on August 30.

* * *

We have a winner in the *Nation* button contest: BEAT HIM BY MORE IN 2004, coined by Rick Mumma of Long Beach, New Jersey. Buttons bearing the slogan will be handed out in New York City during the GOP convention.

* * *

Columnist Katha Pollitt has been chosen to receive a 2004 Woman of Power and Influence Award by the New York City chapter of the National Organization for Women. The awards are given to women "who have demonstrated through their actions a commitment to feminist values, and who have utilized their position, their stature and their expertise in their fields to effect positive change for women." Pollitt was singled out for her "extraordinary journalism." Past recipients include former Congresswoman Liz Holtzman and *Nation* columnist Patricia J. Williams.

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Now at the lowest price ever

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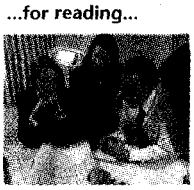
The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp combines the benefits of natural daylight indoors with an energy savings of $51 over the life of one bulb!*

Ever since the first human went into a dark cave and built a fire, people have realized the importance of proper indoor lighting. Unfortunately, since Edison invented the light bulb, lighting technology has remained relatively prehistoric. Modern light fixtures do little to combat many symptoms of improper lighting, such as eyestrain, dryness or burning. As more and more of us spend longer hours in front of a computer monitor, the results are compounded. And the effects of indoor lighting are not necessarily limited to physical well being. Many people believe that the quantity and quality of light can play a part in one's mood and work performance. Now, there's a better way to bring the positive benefits of natural sunlight indoors.

Use the Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp...

...for reading...



...at work...

...and when you need a source of natural light for close-up tasks.

The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp will change the way you see and feel about your living or work spaces. Studies show that sunshine can lift your mood and your energy levels, but as we all know the sun, unfortunately, does not always shine. So to bring the benefits of natural daylight indoors, use the floor lamp that simulates the full spectrum of daylight. You will see with more clarity and enjoyment as this lamp provides sharp visibility for close tasks and reduces eyestrain.

Its 27-watt compact bulb is the equivalent to a 150-watt ordinary light bulb. This makes it perfect for activities such as reading, writing, sewing, needlepoint, and especially for aging eyes.

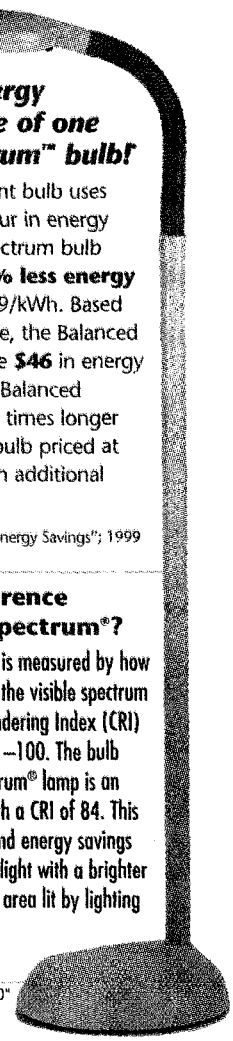
SAVE $51 in energy cost over the life of one Balanced Spectrum™ bulb!

A 150 watt incandescent bulb uses $0.013 per kilowatt hour in energy cost. The Balanced Spectrum bulb uses an average of **70% less energy** which saves you $0.009/kWh. Based on 5,000 hours bulb life, the Balanced Spectrum bulb will save **$46** in energy cost. *Plus*, because the Balanced Spectrum bulb lasts 10 times longer than an incandescent bulb priced at an average of $0.50, an additional **$5** savings is realized.

*Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999

What's the difference with Balanced Spectrum®?

The value of a light source is measured by how well it renders all colors of the visible spectrum without bias. The Color Rendering Index (CRI) is measured on a scale of 1–100. The bulb used in the Balanced Spectrum® lamp is an exceptional light source with a CRI of 84. This will provide better vision and energy savings through a full spectrum of light with a brighter bluish tint versus the same area lit by lighting with more of an orange or reddish tint.



Height as shown: 50"

We've looked at lots of lights, but this one offered the benefit of dual light levels of 27 and 18 watts of power equivalent to 150 and 100-watt incandescent bulbs. This lamp has a flexible goose-neck design for maximum efficiency, with an "Instant On" switch that is flicker-free. The high-tech electronics, user-friendly design, and bulb that lasts five times longer than an ordinary bulb make this product a must-have.

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The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp will change the way you see and feel about your living or work spaces.

This light can change the way you live and work

As a commercial photographer, I probably give more attention to lighting than most people and therefore was impressed with the smooth, soft daylight quality of your lamp.

Dennis M.
Richmond, VA

I sit in my comfortable chair after my husband has gone to bed, and I turn that lamp on. It makes it so nice because it's like daylight over my chair...I don't get sore eyes like I used to.

Grace A.
Margate, FL

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San Francisco Bay Guardian
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–Ain't It Cool News
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"Even if our political leaders cannot read the pulse of a changing world, the people do."
—Terry Tempest Williams
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COMMENT

Genocide in Darfur

Ten years after Rwanda, a genocide is unfolding again while the world watches and refuses to say its name. The failure of the United States and the international community to act in Rwanda a decade ago cost 800,000 lives. Now, up to 1 million people face a similar fate in Darfur, western Sudan, as a result of an ongoing government campaign to destroy a portion of its population. What is happening in Darfur is genocide, and must be called that. The term "genocide" not only captures the fundamental characteristics of the Khartoum government's intent and actions, it also invokes clear international obligations.

Yet, as horrifying reports continue to emerge, and as a humanitarian emergency grows, there is no indication that the United States or the United Nations is prepared to intervene—despite promises of "never again" and explicit obligations under the 1948 Convention on Genocide. For more than a year, the Khartoum government has systematically obstructed access to Darfur and blocked international efforts to establish a relief program. More recently, it has failed to honor the cease-fire it signed in April. As a result, Darfur now faces the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with 30,000 people already killed and more than a million internally displaced. International aid agencies say that even if humanitarian relief arrives now, 350,000 people may still die.

Sudan, geographically Africa's largest country, has experienced civil war with only a ten-year pause since independence in 1956. More than 2 million people have been killed and twice that many displaced in the long-running war between successive governments of the north and peoples of the south. Recent progress toward peace has brought hope that this troubled history will finally come to a close, but the growing crisis in Darfur, which began last year, casts a dark shadow. In Darfur, the Sudanese government is destroying African Muslim communities because some among them have challenged Khartoum's authoritarian rule. As in the conflict between north and south, in Darfur ethnic and racial identities have also been part of the conflict. But at its heart is a repressive minority Arab-centric regime in Khartoum that rules by force, cannot even claim to represent a majority of northerners and has relied on religious fundamentalism to maintain its power.

Ironically, the international community's unwillingness to intervene results—at least in part—from concern that a fragile peace deal between north and south will be jeopardized. Across several administrations, the United States has been involved in promoting peace in Sudan, and the Bush Administration is eager to claim credit for its diplomatic efforts. But as long as the Sudanese government is waging a genocidal war in Darfur, the United States cannot pretend that a meaningful peace deal can be achieved. The Administration had hoped that such an agreement would allow it to lift sanctions on Sudan. This, in turn, would permit US oil companies to pursue a share of the country's recently developed oil wealth. Such interests, however, cannot be allowed to compromise a larger moral obligation.

As parties to the Genocide Convention, all permanent mem-

(Continued on Page 27)

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LIGHT UP THE SKY

The Republicans have every right to meet and choose their candidate in our city without abuse. At the same time their convention creates an opportunity for all of us to express our disagreement with the culture of militarization and violence that our current leaders represent. It is time to change the meanspirited and abrasive tone of our civic discourse. We need an alternative to the harsh and degrading words and images that have filled our consciousness since the war began.

AN ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE THAT REQUIRES NO PERMIT

On August 30, from dusk to dawn, all citizens who wish to end the Bush presidency can use light as our metaphor. We can gather informally all over the city with candles, flashlights and plastic wands to silently express our sorrow over all the innocent deaths the war has caused. We can gather in groups or march in silence. No confrontation and above all, no violence, which will only convince the undecided electorate to vote for Bush. Not a word needs to be spoken. The entire world will understand our message. Those of us who live here in rooms with windows on the street can keep our lights on through the night. Imagine, it's 2 or 3 in the morning and our city is ablaze with a silent and overwhelming rebuke... ***Light transforms darkness.***

www.lightupthesky.org

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JONATHAN SCHELL

The Lexicographers

Ever since the September 11 commission stated authoritatively what everyone knew already, namely that there is no evidence that Al Qaeda was in business with Saddam Hussein, a debate of a most peculiar character has unfolded.

Almost no facts—and none of importance—are under dispute. No one now claims that Iraq had anything to do with September 11, or any other attack on the United States, or even that Saddam's regime had any joint undertaking whatsoever with Al Qaeda. Rather, the debate revolves around the definition of words. The highest officials of the executive branch of the government, as if re-baptizing it as an academic department of a university, have turned themselves into so many linguists. What is a "tie," a "relationship," a "link," a "contact," "cooperation"? On questions like these, the White House abounds in opinions.

The language of the report, as everyone knows, was that Al Qaeda and the Iraqi government had no "collaborative relationship." Nor was there "any credible evidence" that the two organizations had "cooperated on any attacks against the United States."

The *New York Times*, perhaps smarting from its recently confessed misreporting regarding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, editorially stated that "there was never any evidence of a link between Iraq and Al Qaeda, between Saddam Hussein and Sept. 11," and demanded "an apology" to the American people from President Bush.

The Lexicographer in Chief and his Vice Lexicographer saw their opening and pounced. Bush stated that while the Administration had never "said that the 9/11 attacks were orchestrated" with Iraqi help, "we did say there were numerous contacts between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda." So, "the reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and Al Qaeda [is] because there was a relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda." Cheney said that the "evidence is overwhelming" of a "relationship."

The co-chairmen of the commission, former Governor Tom Kean and former Representative Lee Hamilton, seemed to try to smooth over the controversy by pointing out that they had not denied the existence of "ties," only of collaboration.

What was now missing, however, from the Administration's new self-defense were all the factual particulars that had given supposed substance to the charge of a relationship in the first place. No longer did the President claim, as he once had, that Saddam was "dealing" with Al Qaeda, or that Iraq "sent bomb-making and document forgery experts to work with Al Qaeda," or "provided Al Qaeda with chemical and biological weapons training." The only relevant facts left on the record were the negative ones described by the commission: Al Qaeda's early attempts to attack Saddam, whose secular Arabism it despised, by helping Iraqi Kurds and its rejected attempt later to secure assistance from Saddam.

Perhaps the most strained attempt to rescue some shred of justification for the Administration's position was William Safire's claim in a recent *Times* column that the authors of the commission report had conflated a true denial that Iraq was involved in September 11 with a false denial that Iraq and Al Qaeda had had "decade-long dealings." But Safire, a specialist in grammar and the meaning of words, must have thought that no one would check his assertion against the report itself, which specifically addresses the decade-long dealings and finds them to be the ones of enmity and refusal to cooperate just mentioned. (Nor in fact does the no-collaborative-relationship finding apply just to September 11; it refers to all Al Qaeda activities since it moved to Afghanistan, around 1996.)

By surrendering the factual ground while hanging tough philologically, the White House and its defenders tacitly bowed to the substance of its critics' case. If the war in Iraq was indeed somehow a good idea, it was not because the word "relationship" can be stretched by certain high-powered word-torturers to cover relations of hostility and rejection.

Does the debate, then, at least bear on the important domestic question of the President's credibility? It surely does, but in this matter there was not much news, for the Administration's response to the collapse of its case repeated the well-worn pattern of its response to the downfall of its claim before the war that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction: monotonous repetition of the falsehood in the face of manifest evidence to the contrary and then a redefinition of words (in that case, confounding actual weapons of mass destruction with mere "programs" for building them), and throughout a tireless insistence that they were right, detached alike from information and the meaning of words. They seem to believe that truth consists not of correspondence of word with fact but of an implacable consistency armored with impervious self-righteousness.

There is no evidence of cooperation between Iraq and Al Qaeda; the Bush Administration has consistently misrepresented this fact. These judgments are not the possible conclusions of a debate that still lies before us; they are the starting point of a new discussion. Its subject is neither the justifications for the war in Iraq nor the President's credibility—for both are obviously in tatters—but the response to all this by the country.

The spotlight now shifts from the liars to the lied-to. How do we—in the news media, in the country at large—like it? Are we asleep or awake? Can we remember what was said to us a few months or even a few weeks ago? Do we care? Can we recall the proper meanings of words? Do we notice that thousands of people have been sent to their death on false premises? Do we have the mental or moral energy to do anything about it? These are the real questions put before us by the reports of the September 11 commission.

Jonathan Schell is the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at the Nation Institute. He is the author, most recently, of A Hole in the World, *a compilation of his "Letter From Ground Zero" columns, just published by Nation Books.*

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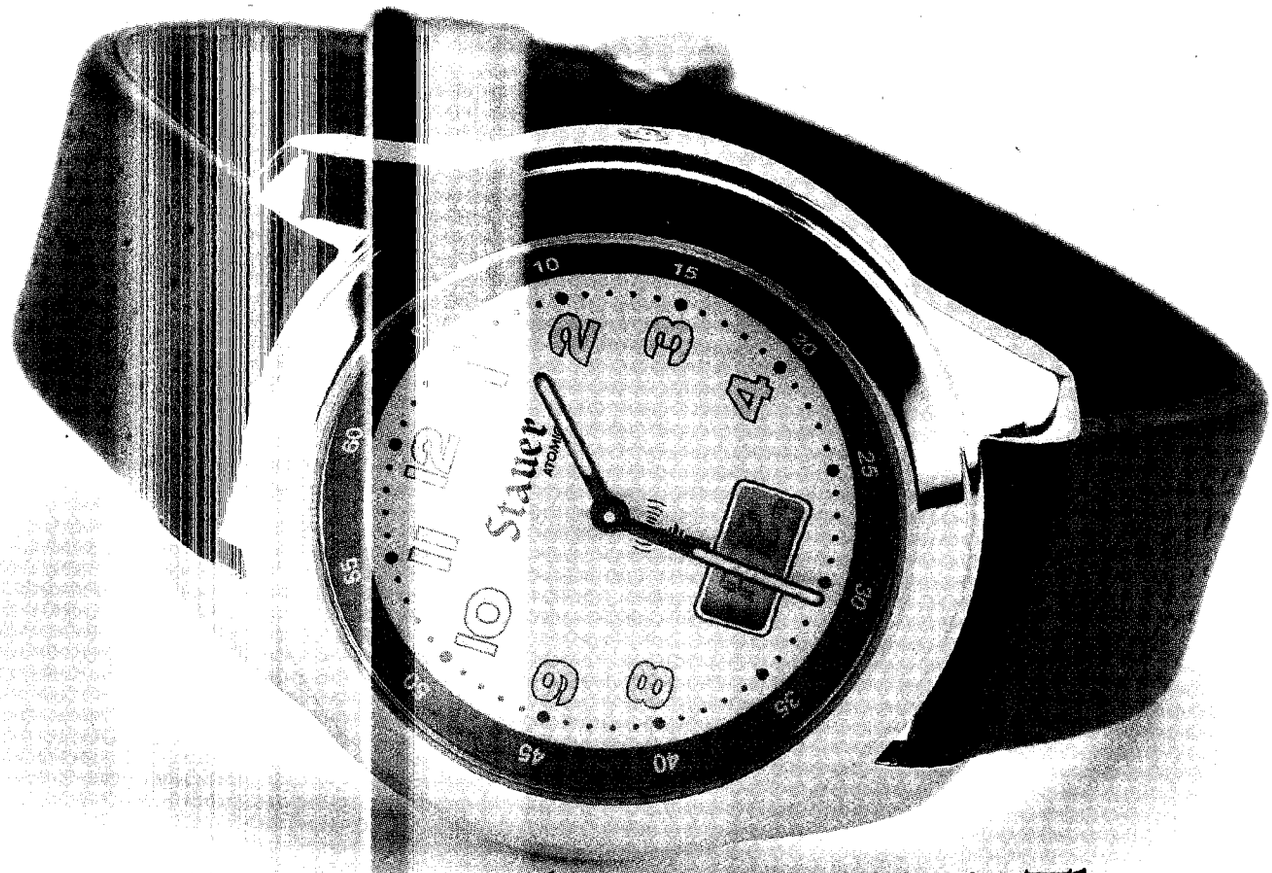

More Accurate than Einstein's Theory

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There is a new super-accurate government device that gives you a perfect use for atomic theory. The US government has engineered the most ingenious, most accurate clock in the world, the new F-1 U.S. Atomic Clock in Boulder, Colorado. Our extraordinary new Stauer EMC^2 watch uses this clock to report the exact time from this remarkable cesium fission clock. So you are on time…all the time. This amazing timepiece will gain or lose only one second over a twenty million-year period. It is that accurate!

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There are some unattractive plastic digital atomic watches on the market, but when our German movement maker made it possible for us to break the $100 price barrier with a beautiful, classically styled stainless steel analog watch, we were truly excited.

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The large numeric markers are luminescent and extremely easy to read so the watch is perfect for low light situation. The EMC^2 is water-resistant to 5 atms as well. The small readout shows you the date and has a digital second counter. This watch is rugged enough to take to the gym but handsome enough to wear to the boardroom or out to dinner. The designers built this watch for those who prefer their watches to be practical and sharp-looking rather than overrated and overpriced.

How can it be so accurate? The new F-1 clock uses laser beams to measure the photons emitted from the cesium atom to measure the resonance frequency. This laser-cooling clock makes it about 20 times more accurate than any other clock on earth.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Venezuela: The Gang's All Here!

You can set your watch by it. The minute some halfway decent government in Latin America begins to reverse the order of things and give the have-nots a break from the grind of poverty and wretchedness, the usual suspects in El Norte rouse themselves from the slumber of indifference and start barking furiously about democratic norms. It happened in 1973 in Chile; we saw it again in Nicaragua in the 1980s; and here's the same show on summer rerun in Venezuela, pending the August 15 recall referendum of President Hugo Chávez.

Chávez is the best thing that has happened to Venezuela's poor in a very long time. His government has actually delivered on some of its promises, with improved literacy rates and more students getting school meals. Public spending has quadrupled on education and tripled on healthcare, and infant mortality has declined. The government is promoting one of the most ambitious land-reform programs seen in Latin America in decades.

Most of this has been done under conditions of economic sabotage. Oil strikes, a coup attempt and capital flight have resulted in about a 4 percent decline in GDP for the five years that Chávez has been in office. But the economy is growing at close to 12 percent this year, and with world oil prices near $40 a barrel, the government has extra billions that it's using for social programs. So naturally the United States wants him out, just as the rich in Venezuela do. Chávez was re-elected in 2000 for a six-year term. A US-backed coup against him was badly botched in 2002.

The imperial script calls for a human rights organization to start braying about irregularities by their intended victim. And yes, here's José Miguel Vivanco of Human Rights Watch. We last met him in this column helping to ease a $1.7 billion US aid package for Colombia's military apparatus. This time he's holding a press conference in Caracas, hollering about the brazen way Chávez is trying to expand membership of Venezuela's Supreme Court, the same way FDR did, and for the same reason: that the Venezuelan court has been effectively packed the other way for decades, with judicial flunkies of the rich. I don't recall Vivanco holding too many press conferences to protest that perennial iniquity.

The "international observers" recruited to save the rich traditionally include the Organization of American States and the Carter Center; in the case of the Venezuelan recall they have mustered dead on schedule. On behalf of the opposition, they exerted enormous pressure on the country's independent National Electoral Council during the signature-gathering and verification process. Eventually the head of the OAS mission had to be replaced by the OAS secretary general because of his unacceptable public statements. The Carter Center's team is headed by Jennifer McCoy, whose forthcoming book, *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela*, leans heavily against the government. One of its contributors is José Antonio Gil of the Datanalysis Polling Firm, most often cited for US media analysis. The *Los Angeles Times* quoted Gil on what to do: "And he can see only one way out of the political crisis surrounding President Hugo Chávez. 'He has to be killed,' he said, using his finger to stab the table in his office far above this capital's filthy streets. 'He has to be killed.'"

Media manipulation is an essential part of the script, and here, right on cue, comes Bill Clinton's erstwhile pollster, Stan Greenberg, still a leading Democratic Party strategist. Greenberg is under contract to RCTV, one of the right-wing media companies leading the Venezuelan opposition and recall effort. It's a pollster's dream job. Not only does he have enormous resources against an old-fashioned, politically unsophisticated poor people's movement, but his firm has something comrades back home can only fantasize about: control over the Venezuelan media. Imagine if the right wing controlled almost the entire media during Clinton's impeachment. That's the situation in Venezuela. Just think what Greenberg's associate, Mark Feierstein—a veteran of similar NED efforts in ousting the Sandinistas in the 1990 elections—can do with this kind of totalitarian media control. NED? That's the National Endowment for Democracy, praised not so long ago by John Kerry, who, like Bush, publicly craves the ouster of Chávez.

The NED is coming over the hill arm in arm with the CIA and CIA-backed institutions in the AFL-CIO, where John Sweeney's team has dismally failed to clean house. The NED has helped fund the opposition to Chávez to the tune of more than $1 million a year. Among the recipients are organizations whose leaders actually supported the April 2002 coup—they signed the decree that overthrew the elected president and vice president and abolished the country's democratic institutions, including the Constitution, Supreme Court and National Assembly. The coup was thwarted only because millions of Venezuelans rallied for Chávez.

Left out of the coup government, despite his support for it, was Carlos Ortega, head of the CTV (Central Labor Federation). The AFL's Solidarity Center, successor to the CIA-linked AIFLD, gets more than 80 percent of its funding from the NED and USAID and has funneled NED money to Ortega and his collaborators. The Solidarity Center has been up to its ears in opposition plotting, a reprise of the Allende years, when the AFL helped destroy Chilean democracy. The AFL has denied any role, but Rob Collier, an excellent *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter, recently gave a detailed refutation of AFL apologetics in an exchange in the current *New Labor Forum*. "In Venezuela," he writes, "the AFL-CIO has blindly supported a reactionary union establishment as it tried repeatedly to overthrow President Hugo Chávez—and, in the process, wrecked the country's economy.... The CTV worked in lockstep with FEDECAMARAS, the nation's business association, to carry out the three general strikes/lockouts" of 2001, 2002 and 2003. The CTV, Collier says, was directly involved in coup organizing, and its leader was scheduled to be part of the new junta.

The end of this particular drama has yet to be written. The left here in the United States could make a difference if it got off its haunches and threw itself into the fray. ■

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PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Unnatural Acts

DIARY OF A MAD LAW PROFESSOR

By now, it has become something of a media cliché to watch "fringe" protesters jumping up and down from the edges of G-8 conferences held at ever more remote locations. But the degree to which market ideals have gained supremacy in all spheres, from crime to health insurance to family relations, should be of greater social interest. This shift has resulted in the privatizing of some traditionally public functions without regard for art or idealism, custom or sentimentality, culture or locale.

When we contract out military operations, misbehavior of the subcontractor technically shifts from state action to transaction cost. When states "outsource" the prison industry, local oversight is sacrificed as prisoners in one state end up farmed out to more cost-efficient facilities in another. When unions sue for better working conditions or gender equality, manufacturers relocate. Private companies, after all, are not responsible for upholding civic virtue or community values. The primary duty of any profit-seeking entity is toward shareholders—the bottom line rather than the common good.

Consider the tension between government and corporate control of licenses, patents and usages when the commodity is information—whether words or images or genetic patterns. In an era of biotechnology—to say nothing of bioterrorism—this arena portends battles for control that may be as unsettling as anything the oil wars have unleashed. Everywhere there are debates about our ability to alter the environment or the gene pool in dramatic, irreversible ways. Some companies want to farm fish genetically engineered to grow 200 to 300 percent faster than the norm. How do we govern the potential consequences of such giant specimens interbreeding with their indigenous cousins? This is not merely an issue of how to regulate industrial impact on the environment. It is also one of whether and how to limit corporate ownership *of* the environment. A recent decision by the Supreme Court of Canada has sent tremors through the legal community for precisely such revolutionary implications. In *Monsanto Canada Inc. v. Schmeiser*, the justices set a global precedent by granting broad proprietary rights in a living organism—and its progeny.

Percy Schmeiser is a canola farmer in Saskatchewan. In 1997 he sprayed a common weedkiller called Roundup on three acres of his property. He noticed that some of the canola plants were resistant to the herbicide. He collected the seeds of those plants and used them to plant 1,000 more acres. It turns out that the Roundup-resistant plants were derived from a genetically altered strain developed and patented by Monsanto. Under the terms of Monsanto's license, farmers who purchase the seeds are not permitted to collect and replant seeds from what they grow. Rather, they must repurchase seeds each season so as to more effectively permit Monsanto to recover its enormous research and development costs. Schmeiser, however, had never purchased seeds from Monsanto; he simply found the plants growing on his land, either because the seed had blown in from neighboring farms or been dropped by passing trucks. Nevertheless, the court upheld Monsanto's claims of patent infringement and required Schmeiser to pay a licensing fee and hand over any remaining seeds in his possession. "The patented genes and cells are not merely a 'part' of the plant," ruled the court, but extend to the "entire physical structure" including subsequent generations of the plant.

The complications of this case raise questions about the ethical balance we face in unsettled times. As in the Industrial Age, new technologies bring shifts in accumulated power such that surpluses or shortages of vital resources pit long-term common values against immediate self-interest. The *Monsanto* case, if it's a signal of things to come, represents a shift from government rules that grant landowners power over everything that grows "naturally" upon it. It makes us question the balance between human control and the heretofore ungovernable forces we deemed natural. It significantly diminishes the legally subsidized sweat equity traditionally assumed when farmers planted their fields and culled the seeds of their crops, the fruit of their labor.

Those assumptions are important because they so profoundly define us. We need to have a much more mainstream conversation about this radical dimension of new and emerging property notions. What does it mean to own the processes of biological reproduction so completely? What standing does citizenry have against or in addition to the interests of private parties to particular contracts? Has the value of physically taming nature (i.e., farming) become utterly subservient to the microengineered taming of nature (i.e., research and development in a laboratory)? Does this reassignment of value and agency create a global monopoly of food production, wide as fish may swim or wind may blow? Is there a remediable property loss beyond what will be litigated in now-privatized licensing cases? Does this newest frontier ultimately destabilize the notion of a work ethic ennobled by physical labor—the very premise of our current free enterprise system—and replace it with the definitive dominance of knowledge elites? The common man becomes rather too literally encumbered by hoarded genetic endowments.

Of course, these are not new tropes, but it is in transformative times like these that we see how much of what we think of as the freedom of nature is in fact a comfortable fiction insured by collectively reasoned (and therefore deemed fair) allocations and distributions of government-held power. If we are in a moment when governments are ceding much of that power to other monopolistic entities, whether in war, medicine, manufacturing or agriculture, we should make sure we have the chance to debate openly our desire to retain the not-always-efficient rights of citizenship in an apparently fast-emerging corporate order. The *Monsanto* case was reported on the business page of only a few newspapers in the United States. It ought to be of major political concern for us all. ■

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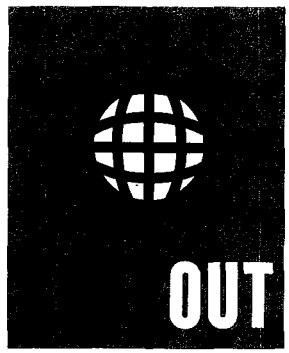
NAOMI KLEIN

Shameless in Iraq



Good news out of Baghdad: the Program Management Office, which oversees the $18.4 billion in US reconstruction funds, has finally set a goal it can meet. Sure, electricity is below prewar levels, streets are rivers of sewage and more Iraqis have been fired than hired. But now the PMO has contracted with British mercenary firm Aegis to protect its employees from "assassination, kidnapping, injury and"—get this—"embarrassment." I don't know if Aegis will succeed in protecting PMO employees from violent attack, but embarrassment? I'd say mission already accomplished. The people in charge of rebuilding Iraq can't be embarrassed, because clearly they have no shame.

In the run-up to the June 30 underhand (sorry, I can't bring myself to call it a "handover"), US occupation powers have been unabashed in their efforts to steal money that is supposed to aid a war-ravaged people. The State Department has taken $184 million earmarked for drinking water projects and moved it to the budget for the lavish new US Embassy in Saddam's former palace. Short $1 billion for the embassy, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said he might have to "rob from Peter in my fiefdom to pay Paul." In fact, he is robbing Iraq's people, who, according to a recent study by Public Citizen, are facing "massive outbreaks of cholera, diarrhea, nausea and kidney stones" from drinking contaminated water.

If occupation chief Paul Bremer and his staff were capable of embarrassment, they might be a little sheepish about having spent only $3.2 billion of the $18.4 billion Congress allotted—the reason the reconstruction is so disastrously behind schedule. At first, Bremer said the money would be spent by the time Iraq was sovereign, but apparently someone had a better idea: Parcel it out over five years so Ambassador John Negroponte can use it as leverage. With $15 billion outstanding, how likely will Iraq's politicians be to refuse US demands for military bases and economic "reforms"?

Unwilling to let go of their own money, the shameless ones have had no qualms about dipping into funds belonging to Iraqis. After losing the fight to keep control of Iraq's oil money after the underhand, occupation authorities grabbed $2.5 billion of those revenues and are now spending the money on projects that are supposedly already covered by US tax dollars.

But then, if financial scandals made you blush, the entire reconstruction of Iraq would be pretty mortifying. From the start, its architects rejected the idea that it should be a New Deal–style public works project for Iraqis to reclaim their country. Instead, it was treated as an ideological experiment in privatization. The dream was for multinational firms, mostly from the United States, to swoop in and dazzle the Iraqis with their speed and efficiency.

Iraqis saw something else: desperately needed jobs going to Americans, Europeans and South Asians; roads crowded with trucks shipping in supplies produced in foreign plants, while Iraqi factories were not even supplied with emergency generators. As a result, the reconstruction was seen not as a recovery from war but as an extension of the occupation, a foreign invasion of a different sort. And so, as the resistance grew, the reconstruction itself became a prime target.

The contractors have responded by behaving even more like an invading army, building elaborate fortresses in the Green Zone and surrounding themselves with mercenaries. And being hated is expensive. According to the latest estimates, security costs are eating up 25 percent of reconstruction contracts—money not being spent on hospitals, water-treatment plants or telephone exchanges.

Meanwhile, insurance brokers selling sudden-death policies to contractors in Iraq have doubled their premiums, with insurance costs reaching 30 percent of payroll. That means many companies are spending half their budgets arming and insuring themselves against the people they are supposedly in Iraq to help. And according to an estimate by Charles Adwan of Transparency International, quoted on NPR's *Marketplace*, "At least 20 percent of US spending in Iraq is lost to corruption." How much is actually left over for reconstruction? Don't do the math.

Rather than models of speed and efficiency, the contractors look more like overbilling, underperforming, lumbering beasts, barely able to move for fear of the hatred they have helped generate. The problem goes well beyond the latest reports of Halliburton drivers abandoning $85,000 trucks on the road because they don't carry spare tires. Private contractors are also accused of playing leadership roles in the torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. A landmark class-action lawsuit filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights alleges that the Titan Corporation and CACI International conspired with US officials to "humiliate, torture and abuse persons" to increase demand for their "interrogation services."

And then there's Aegis, the company being paid $293 million to save the PMO from embarrassment. It turns out that Aegis's CEO, Tim Spicer, has a bit of an embarrassing past himself. In the 1990s, he helped put down rebels and stage a military coup in Papua New Guinea and hatched a plan to break an arms embargo in Sierra Leone.

If Iraq's occupiers were capable of feeling shame, they might have responded by imposing tough new regulations. Instead, Senate Republicans just defeated an attempt to bar private contractors from interrogating prisoners and also voted down a proposal to impose stiffer penalties on contractors who overbill. Meanwhile, the White House is also trying to get immunity from prosecution for US contractors in Iraq and has requested the exemption from the new Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi.

It seems likely that Allawi will agree, since he is, after all, a kind of US contractor himself: A former CIA spy, he is already threatening to declare martial law, while his Defense Minister says of resistance fighters, "We will cut off their hands, and we will behead them." In a final feat of outsourcing, Iraqi governance has been subcontracted to even more brutal surrogates. Is this embarrassing, after an invasion to overthrow a dictatorship? Not at all—this is what the occupiers call "sovereignty." The Aegis guys can relax: Embarrassment is not going to be an issue. ■

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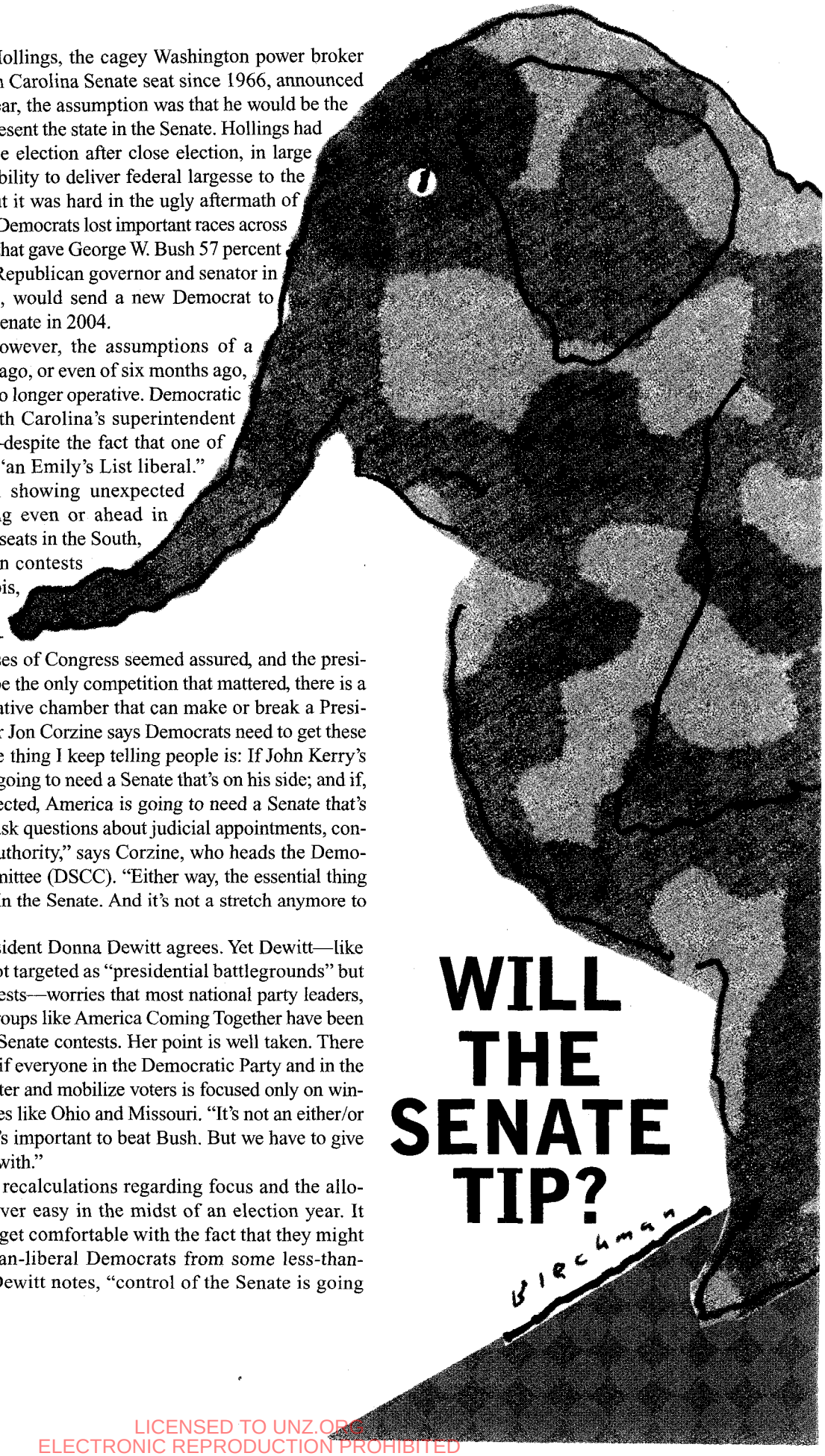
ARTICLES

WILL THE SENATE TIP?

by JOHN NICHOLS



When Ernest "Fritz" Hollings, the cagey Washington power broker who has held a South Carolina Senate seat since 1966, announced his retirement last year, the assumption was that he would be the last Democrat to represent the state in the Senate. Hollings had held on through close election after close election, in large part because of his ability to deliver federal largesse to the folks back home. But it was hard in the ugly aftermath of the 2002 electoral debacle—when Democrats lost important races across the South—to imagine that a state that gave George W. Bush 57 percent of the vote in 2000, and elected a Republican governor and senator in 2002, would send a new Democrat to the Senate in 2004.

However, the assumptions of a year ago, or even of six months ago, are no longer operative. Democratic candidate Inez Tenenbaum, South Carolina's superintendent of education, leads in the polls—despite the fact that one of her opponents dismisses her as "an Emily's List liberal." And Tenenbaum's not alone in showing unexpected strength. Democrats are running even or ahead in four of five races for open Senate seats in the South, and they're also even or ahead in contests for Republican-held seats in Illinois, Oklahoma, Colorado and Alaska.

Suddenly, in a year when continued GOP control of both houses of Congress seemed assured, and the presidential election was supposed to be the only competition that mattered, there is a real race for control of the legislative chamber that can make or break a President's agenda. New Jersey Senator Jon Corzine says Democrats need to get these Senate races on their radar. "The thing I keep telling people is: If John Kerry's elected, to get anything done he's going to need a Senate that's on his side; and if, God forbid, George Bush is re-elected, America is going to need a Senate that's *not* on his side—that's willing to ask questions about judicial appointments, conduct hearings, use its oversight authority," says Corzine, who heads the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC). "Either way, the essential thing is to have a Democratic majority in the Senate. And it's not a stretch anymore to say that it can happen."

South Carolina AFL-CIO president Donna Dewitt agrees. Yet Dewitt—like activists in other states that are not targeted as "presidential battlegrounds" but that have competitive Senate contests—worries that most national party leaders, unions and "shadow campaign" groups like America Coming Together have been slow to turn their attention to the Senate contests. Her point is well taken. There are indeed days when it seems as if everyone in the Democratic Party and in the shadow groups developed to register and mobilize voters is focused only on winning presidential battleground states like Ohio and Missouri. "It's not an either/or thing," says Dewitt. "Of course it's important to beat Bush. But we have to give John Kerry a Senate he can work with."

Doing that will require some recalculations regarding focus and the allocation of resources, which is never easy in the midst of an election year. It will also require progressives to get comfortable with the fact that they might have to help elect some less-than-liberal Democrats from some less-than-liberal states. "Like it or not," Dewitt notes, "control of the Senate is going

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to be decided in states like South Carolina."

While the presidential competition between Bush and Kerry remains the highest-profile fight of 2004, there is no question that the far less closely watched fight for the Senate will play a huge role in defining the political realities of 2005. Think of it this way: If a re-elected President Bush sets out to expand the troop presence in Iraq, he would have a hard time selling the plan to a Democratic Senate where the Armed Services Committee would be chaired by Michigan's Carl Levin, and where the Appropriations Committee would dance to the gavel beat of West Virginian Robert Byrd, who like Levin opposed authorizing the use of force in Iraq. And if Bush continues his push to expand the Patriot Act's assault on civil liberties, he would surely face problems with a Senate Judiciary Committee chaired by Vermont's Patrick Leahy, a critic of Administration proposals to grab broader powers to detain and deport immigrants, and whose Constitution subcommittee would be chaired by Wisconsin's Russ Feingold, the only member of the Senate to oppose the Patriot Act in 2001.

'The Senate, when it is controlled by his own party, can push [a President] to take tougher stands.' —Chellie Pingree of Common Cause

Just imagine how different hearings by the Intelligence Committee would be if West Virginia Democrat Jay Rockefeller IV were sitting in the chairman's seat, as opposed to Kansas Republican Pat Roberts, a man whose plodding approach to the Bush Administration's misuse of intelligence regarding weapons of mass destruction represents an epic failure of legislative oversight.

By the same token, if Kerry makes it to the Oval Office his attempts to address the disastrous failure to fund No Child Left Behind education programs would certainly be affected by whether the Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee was chaired by New Hampshire Republican Judd Gregg, the chief Senate defender of Bush's mandate-rich but cash-starved education agenda, or Massachusetts Democrat Ted Kennedy, one of the few senators who is not afraid to talk about fully funding federal mandates. Indeed, Common Cause president Chellie Pingree suggests that while a Democratic Senate could be counted on to temper Bush, it could also be counted on to push Kerry in a more progressive direction. "The Senate can really focus the debate and get a President to pay attention to matters that need to be resolved," says Pingree, a former Maine legislator who was defeated in a 2002 US Senate race. "A President may come in wanting to be cautious, wanting to govern from the center on major issues like energy policy, Medicare, prescription drugs. The Senate, when it is controlled by his own party, can push him to take tougher stands—I actually expect that would happen more with a President Kerry and a Democratic Senate."

That's certainly what Corzine, one of the most progressive members of the Senate, is counting on. Suggestions that Democrats might actually come out of the 2004 election season with a President *and* control of the Senate provoked laughter when Corzine took over the DSCC in late 2002, after the Democrats had lost control of the Senate in one of the worst midterm election setbacks ever for an opposition party. While the fight for dominance in the House of Representatives, where Republicans now hold an eleven-seat majority, could turn out to be competitive if Kerry takes off as a candidate, the Senate, where Republicans hold only a two-seat majority, is already up for grabs. That doesn't mean that Democrats will retake the chamber. It just means that they have a chance to do so.

"When I came in, people were talking about minimizing losses," recalls Corzine, a first-term senator who shook up the DSCC to make it more flexible and efficient and who gets credit for improving Democratic fortunes. He's been a particularly effective recruiter of candidates and has convinced a number of state parties, though not all of them, to pull together and avoid bitter primary fights. And, although there are still worries about the extent to which Democratic contenders will be outspent in most states, he has persuaded fellow Democratic senators to raise money for candidates in competitive races. But Corzine is the first to admit that "we've gotten some political breaks that no one could have predicted: Republican retirements that offset our retirements and, maybe even more important, a shift in the mood regarding the direction of the country." Lingering concerns about the economy are one factor; the other is that the war in Iraq no longer plays as positively as it once did.

On a recent campaign day in Appleton, Wisconsin, a Republican-leaning city that produced Senator Joseph McCarthy, Democratic Senator Feingold got a flavor of the changing mood. When Feingold, who won a second term in one of the closest races of 1998 and is seeking a third term this year, stopped into the Copper Rock Coffee Company, he encountered a group of locals who wanted to talk about the mess in Iraq. Feingold, who voted against the war, called it a "monumental failure of American foreign policy," and many customers nodded in agreement. "People are really ill at ease about the war," he says. "I think that makes it a lot harder for the Administration to question the patriotism of Democrats who disagree, or who seek a better debate."

That's a big deal, because in 2002 patriotism—defined as support for the President—proved to be a factor in the Democrats' loss of the Senate. The most well-known example was Georgia Senator Max Cleland, the disabled Vietnam War vet who lost after being accused—directly in Republican attack ads and indirectly in Bush campaign appearances that suggested the "patriotic" vote was for his GOP opponent—of lacking the commitment to defend the country. White House political czar Karl Rove had planned to make national security issues a centerpiece of Republican campaigning in 2004 as well, but that's become a dicier strategy as Americans have become more and more disturbed by the Administration's conduct of the war in Iraq—and by the thought that, as Feingold and others suggest, Bush has steered resources away from the real war on terror.

The Abu Ghraib prison-abuse photos have taken their toll on Bush even in states like Oklahoma, where Democrats hope to pick up a Republican-held Senate seat. "He's not near as popular in Oklahoma as he was. He's lost a lot of support out here," says Myrna Burman, the veteran political director of the Oklahoma AFL-CIO, of Bush. "I'm not saying that somebody's going to beat him here, but he has gone down. I think a lot of people are worried about him. They may not express that worry by voting

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against him. But they might do it by voting for a Democrat for the Senate—somebody to keep an eye on him."

But can lucky breaks and shifting sentiments really add up to fifty-one seats—the magic number that, no matter who wins the presidency, would put Democrats in charge of the Senate next January? Corzine thinks so, and a growing number of analysts, such as Charlie Cook, editor of *The Cook Political Report*, say Corzine's crew has "a legitimate shot at winning back control of the Senate." Here's how the math works:

§ Most Democratic incumbents are in solid shape. Senate minority leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota faces the toughest re-election race, but the June 1 victory of Democrat Stephanie Herseth in a special election for a South Dakota House seat suggests Democrats are holding their own in a state that gave Bush 60 percent of the vote in 2000. Senators Patty Murray of Washington and Wisconsin's Feingold face credible competition, but they're both ahead in the polls. Eleven other Democratic incumbents, ranging from Vermont's Leahy to New York's Chuck Schumer, look to be safe bets.

Activists warn that Democrats, in their eagerness to win new voters, must not ignore core supporters—who don't want 'Republican-lite.'

§ The retirement of five Southern Democratic senators, which one Republican state chairman said would put Democrats in a "Custer's Last Stand" position in the Deep South, have not proved to be as devastating as anticipated. In four of the five states, Democrats recruited candidates they identified as their strongest contenders: Tenenbaum in South Carolina, Erskine Bowles in North Carolina, Chris John in Louisiana and Betty Castor in Florida. All four have long track records of public service; all are moderates with home-state reputations that allow them to run as regional rather than "nationalized" Democrats; all tend to emphasize economic differences with the Republicans—particularly on issues like global trade—rather than social and foreign-policy concerns; and all put distance between themselves and Kerry.

This requires a subtle balancing act: The Democratic base may like the Massachusetts senator and his reasonably liberal stands on social issues, but Democratic Senate candidates in states like the Carolinas will almost certainly need to attract Bush voters to win. The prospect that Democrats will win crossover votes is real enough that they are considered competitive in open-seat contests across the South. Only in Georgia do most observers say that GOP contenders have clear leads over the Democrats who are seeking their party's nomination: Representative Denise Majette and businessman Cliff Oxford. It's still likely that Democrats will lose seats in the South. But the possibility that they will hold two or three means they will not be set back so far that they won't be able to make up the difference in other parts of the country.

§ The retirement of three Republican senators, and the vulnerability of at least one more, create the prospect that Democrats will pick up as many as four seats outside the South. In Illinois, the Democratic Senate candidate who has drawn the most national attention this year, Barack Obama—who is running as a critic of the war and a proponent of economic justice—leads by twenty-two points in the latest *Chicago Tribune* poll. Obama is already being hailed by *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert as "the point man for a new kind of politics designed to piece together a coalition reminiscent of the one blasted apart by the bullet that killed Robert Kennedy in 1968." In addition to Obama, Democrats have a good chance to win GOP-held seats with candidates like state Attorney General Ken Salazar in Colorado, former Governor Tony Knowles in Alaska and Representative Brad Carson in Oklahoma. Salazar and Knowles lead in the polls, while Carson is running even. Salazar and Carson have both emphasized winning back rural Democratic voters by campaigning heavily in small towns with detailed farm and rural-development proposals.

In Kentucky, State Senator Dan Mongiardo has done much the same in a surprisingly strong challenge to GOP incumbent Jim Bunning. Polls place Mongiardo within striking distance of Bunning. Two other Democratic challengers, Missouri State Treasurer Nancy Farmer, who is running against Senator Kit Bond, and Pennsylvania Representative Joe Hoeffel, who faces Senator Arlen Specter, can point to poll numbers that suggest they could yet threaten the incumbents. And progressives will want to keep an eye on New Hampshire, where 94-year-old campaign finance reform advocate Doris "Granny D" Haddock, who just entered the race as a Democrat, can be expected to mount a colorful challenge to Judd Gregg, the GOP incumbent.

If the Democrats re-elect their incumbents, hold three of the five Southern seats and win the four GOP-held seats outside the South, where they are currently running strong, they're at fifty-one. It's doable, but Corzine is not popping champagne corks. Late Democratic primaries in Louisiana, Florida and Colorado will drain resources and could yet produce party divisions. (In Florida Al Gore weighed in with a statement to the *Miami Herald* describing one Democratic candidate, Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas, as "the single most treacherous and dishonest person I dealt with" during the 2000 campaign.)

There are also concerns, expressed by activists like Donna Dewitt, that Democratic candidates such as Tenenbaum are so busy courting Republican voters that they could turn off Democrats. "It's important to attract new backers, but you've also got to engage the base, and you don't do that by running as Republican-lite," she says. Dewitt's right: Hollings and most other successful Southern Democrats of the past were clearly at odds with Republicans, especially on economic issues, and this year's crop of Democratic challengers will lose if they get too close to the GOP line on issues such as trade policy. Tenenbaum, whose cautious early campaigning caused the most concern, may be getting the message; she recently came out strongly against the Bush-backed Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Ultimately, however, what home-state activists and national players like Corzine worry about most is not message but visibility—the prospect that Senate races, most of them not in the eighteen or nineteen presidential battleground states, will fall off the radar in a year when so much attention is being focused on the race for the White House. Says Corzine, "This is my greatest fear: that we don't get the resources and support for these candidates who can win because everybody is so gunned up about the presidency that they take their eyes off the ball. We've got to win the presidency, but we've also got to win the Senate." ■

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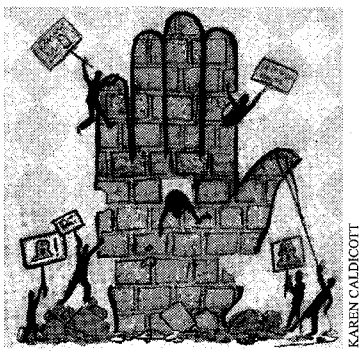
WHILE NEW YORK CITY AUTHORITIES AND ANTI-GOP ORGANIZERS SQUARE OFF OVER THE RIGHT TO RALLY, CULTURAL ACTIVISTS ARE TAKING MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS.

The Fine Art of Bush-Bashing

LIZA FEATHERSTONE

For the past decade, in contrast with the 1960s, political and cultural dissidents have occupied largely separate worlds. Anti-globalization activism, for example, inspired little music and art of significance, and with a few notable exceptions, the cultural underground—indie rockers, hip-hop performers and visual artists—stayed out of politics. Protest art was becoming an oxymoron. As New York City's preparations for the Republican convention show, George W. Bush is changing all that.



KAREN CALDICOTT

Artists, musicians and other creative types, most unaffiliated with activist organizations, are planning numerous ways to "welcome" the Republicans. A No RNC Poster Project is attracting stunning talent. The Bowery Poetry Club will be open twenty-four hours throughout the convention. Visitors to the city at the end of August may see illegal murals with political messages, and the city itself may become a giant art installation. Don't be surprised if, say, you're crossing the street and a traffic light flashes "Beat Bush" instead of "Don't Walk." Some visual interventions may even be visible from the air, greeting the right-wingers as they fly into the city (since we don't want to spoil such plans, that's all we're going to say about them). One People's Project, a New Brunswick, New Jersey, antiracist group whose website offers free "Ronald Reagan Rots in Hell" buttons, plans to hold a punk rock and hip-hop concert along with Punknite.com, MediaClectic and Ever Reviled Records in Tompkins Square Park on September 2.

Of course, standard-issue protests are planned, too, and not insignificant ones: While organizers won't say how many people they expect, considering the strength of the coalitions and the rank vileness of the Republicans, 1 million people could easily show up. United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) hopes to hold a march and rally on August 29. A coalition called Still We Rise will lead a Poor People's March & Rally for Justice the next day.

The city is desperately trying to prevent these actions from happening. The G-8 meeting in Georgia set a bad example, as protesters were banned from Sea Island, and the surrounding area was practically under military occupation—Humvees, police and military uniforms were everywhere. As a result, only a few hundred protesters showed up. In New York City it would be impossible to prevent protest, but local officials are doing their best. So far, only the Labor Day march, which is organized by major unions, has been granted a permit. The Parks and Recreation Department has refused to issue UFPJ a permit for a rally in Central Park, ostensibly out of concern for the vegetation. Every major city newspaper, including the right-wing *New York Post*, has objected to the city's decision. Most New Yorkers agree with UFPJ spokesman Bill Dobbs, who says, "It is a public park. It's not a grass museum!"

There is no doubt that some activists are planning to engage in direct action and civil disobedience. But there is less emphasis on this than at past protests; indeed, the plans for colorful artistic activism are more representative of the prevailing spirit. Activists do not, at a time when hostility to Bush is so widespread, want to help him out by creating an unappealing fracas. Amanda Hickman, a Reclaim the Streets activist who has often been involved in direct action in the past, is now working instead on Counterconvention.org, a website informing the public about RNC protests. "We are really trying to figure out what will be most effective," she says. "There is a lot of concern about how this could play out in the press. You don't want people to just see masked anarchists running around."

It's important to organizers that the protests seem hospitable to members of the general public; otherwise, fearing confrontations between police and demonstrators, mainstream Bush-haters—who are legion—could stay home. Aware that opposition to Bush reaches across age, race and class lines in a way that many specific issues do not, organizers want to be as inclusive as possible. Compared with protests against the IMF, says Hickman, "there is really broad interest in this. Moms, dads—it's not going to be just a bunch of 20-year-olds in the streets."

The emphasis on artistic expression is partly borne out of this "discomfort with the idea of mass riots in the streets," says Hickman. But these days, the government doesn't seem to like "creative" and artistic expression against Bush any more than it likes marches and rallies. In Boston in late May, a student who dressed up as an Abu Ghraib torture victim, wearing a hood and standing on a milk crate in front of an Army recruiting center, was arrested and charged with making a terrorist threat (charges against him have been dropped). And in Buffalo, an artist faces indictment under the USA Patriot Act for making a political art installation that used scientific equipment; the Feds are, surreally, claiming that the art was actually a weapons lab.

This mentality has even affected New York City. The Tompkins Square Park concert, for example, has no permit yet. In March the group staging the event was issued a permit for a "concert" of no more than seventy-five decibels. "That's basically your car stereo," objects organizer Daryle Lamont Jenkins. In a peculiar development several weeks later, the group received a letter from the Parks

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Liza Featherstone, a Nation *contributing editor, is the author of* Selling Women Short: The Landmark Battle for Workers' Rights at Wal-Mart, *which will be published by Basic Books in November.*

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and Recreation Department rescinding even that limited permit, claiming it was issued in "error." Borough Commissioner William Castro wrote, "At this time we are unable to make determinations on any permit applications for events of this scale on September 2, 2004." If the Bloomberg administration doesn't give in, says Jenkins, "they will more or less prove our point, which is that Republicans are repressing our rights as American citizens."

That could help swell the protesters' ranks and involve still

Full of Beans in Boston

During the 2000 election, many activists saw little difference between Democrats and Republicans. This year, however, giving Dubya the boot has become the overriding concern, and the slogan "The Evil of Two Lessers" has been replaced by "Anybody But Bush." That leaves progressives with a question: whether to demonstrate at the Democratic National Convention in Boston July 26–29 or to give the Dems a pass and concentrate on the Republican National Convention in New York August 30–September 1.

While protesters for the latter have united behind the banner of "RNC Not Welcome," a coalition of progressives in Boston became bogged down this winter in soul-searching discussions about their message. "Although the Democrats turn our stomachs in a lot of ways, we also didn't want to derail the 'Dump Bush' agenda," says Cynthia Peters, an organizer with United for Justice With Peace. The coalition eventually decided on a middle road between protesting and not protesting by organizing "People's Parties" in four Boston neighborhoods to coincide with the DNC's opening parties for delegates on Sunday, July 25. These, in turn, will cap a three-day Boston Social Forum, which will include more than 400 workshops, seminars, films, performances and exhibits on issues like global justice, immigrants' rights and feminism.

With events like these, organizers hope to provide a positive alternative to both the Democratic platform and the kind of confrontational mobilizations that have led to violence and arrests in the past. The neighborhood parties will also reach out to delegates with the "Fund the Dream" campaign, a national petition calling for the re-allocation of $100 billion from the Defense Department to social programs. Organizers hope the campaign will help forge a bond between sometimes-disparate middle-class antiwar activists and inner-city community organizers that will last beyond the election. They are encouraging activists in other cities to use the energy they might have spent in coming to Boston to throw People's Parties to strengthen their own communities, and they have challenged protesters coming to the DNC to plug into local concerns.

One group that has listened is the Kucinich campaign, which originally planned a mass rally on Boston Common but changed plans in favor of a series of teach-ins and street actions on civil rights, economic justice, the Iraq war and healthcare in neighborhood locations during the week of the convention. These will culminate in a Progressive Convention on Thursday, July 29, at which the campaign and its allies will ratify a progressive platform that will form the basis of a nonprofit political group to continue its work no matter who wins the election. The campaign plans to bring its issues inside on July 29, with a demonstration on the convention floor a half-hour before Kerry's coronation, in which sixty or so delegates will hold signs reading DEMOCRATS FOR JUSTICE and END THE OCCUPATION.

The emphasis on decentralized protest has spread organically through Boston protest circles. Even the "anti-authoritarian" Bl(A)ck Tea Society (a revolutionary riff on the Boston Tea Party) has decided against converging at the convention's FleetCenter location in favor of a street fair on Boston Common, the "Really, REALLY Democratic Bazaar" on July 27. "We think the 'Anybody But Bush' movement is laughable," says BTS member Frank Lamont. "That's what got us Clinton and more inequality and corporate rule." However, frustrated by the traditional scenario of protesters hurling themselves at a fence lined with riot cops, which they say has become ineffective as a tactic, the group plans acts of creative civil disobedience scattered throughout the city. "Cops are militarized to an insane level now," says Lamont. "It doesn't make sense for us to put ourselves in a situation [confronting] these jackbooted thugs who are just looking for trouble." While the BTS has committed itself to nonviolence, its website calls for protesters to "defend Boston," and the group has offered support to groups espousing a "diversity of tactics."

To be sure, some groups will converge on the convention center, either in a "free speech" area set aside by police or in the street outside the arena. The ANSWER Coalition, which spearheaded many of the protests against the war in Iraq, has called for a rally on Boston Common on July 25, to be followed by a march to the FleetCenter—an action some activists frown upon as unnecessarily spoiling for a fight. "John Kerry voted for [the Iraq war], and he supports the occupation," says ANSWER organizer Peter Cook. "We want to confront the Democratic Party head-on."

Hoping to defuse tension and avoid the violence that marred conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles four years ago, Boston police have stressed that their policy is one of "high tolerance for civil disobedience," according to superintendent Robert Dunford, who oversees convention security. However, the recent arrest of a student protesting the Iraq prison scandal has raised fears that police are cracking down in advance of the convention. City permitting policies have also been restrictive with regard to free speech. Officials denied ANSWER's request for a permit to march in front of the FleetCenter and instituted new rules just two months before the convention, forcing even groups who had been approved for permits to re-apply.

"It's incredible," says Carol Rose, director of ACLU-Massachusetts. "They said they were going to create a one-stop shop, and instead they've laid another layer over the existing bureaucratic structure. It's creating a real roadblock for people who simply want to exercise their rights." MICHAEL BLANDING

Michael Blanding (www.michaelblanding.com), a senior writer at Boston *magazine, is at work on a book about the history of protest in New England. For more on the planned protests, visit www.fundthedream.org, www.bostonsocialforum.org or www.blackteasociety.org.*

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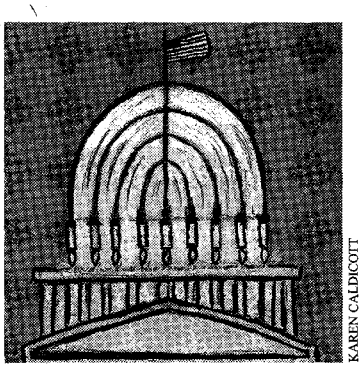
more artistic types, who tend to respond indignantly to First Amendment violations. And as Hickman points out, these repressive incidents do keep the protests in the news, and almost always sympathetically. Jenkins, for his part, is still optimistic that the concert will take place and, most important, that cultural and political activists will continue to work together to fight the right. "The left has more momentum than it's had in thirty years," he says. "Let's hope it stays that way if Kerry wins." ■

A GROWING GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT HAS CHALLENGED THE ARTIFICIAL AIPAC CONSENSUS.

The Jewish Divide on Israel

ESTHER KAPLAN



KAREN CALDICOTT

For a glimpse of how Israel plays out in an American election year, recall the day in September when then–Democratic presidential frontrunner Howard Dean told reporters he would like to see the United States take an "even-handed" approach to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Thirty-four Congressional Democrats responded by sending Dean a harsh letter questioning whether he shared their "unequivocal support for Israel's right to exist," and anonymous e-mails inundated Jewish listservs, accusing him of abandoning Israel. Dean promptly appeared on CNN to defend Israel's assassinations of Palestinian militants.

Or consider the day in February when John Kerry sat down in New York to discuss issues with a group of Jewish leaders handselected by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Hannah Rosenthal, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and one of the few liberals invited, said she had her hand in the air, ready to ask questions about civil rights, poverty and the erosion of the church/state divide, but she was avoided by the facilitators, and the meeting shaped up as a single-agenda affair. "The central issue, no matter how they came at it, was, 'Are you going to be there for Israel in these difficult times?'" Rosenthal recalls. "It was, 'We're putting you on notice that this is our number-one concern.'" Kerry took his cue. During the meeting, he backed off from earlier statements that he'd send Jimmy Carter (seen by the right as pro-Palestinian) to the region to jump-start negotiations, and six weeks later, when George W. Bush, in an agreement with Ariel Sharon, accepted Jewish settlements as permanent and renounced Palestinian refugees' right of return, Kerry immediately endorsed it.

Or consider May 18, when the hawkish American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) held its annual conference in Washington. House majority leader Tom DeLay showed up to speak, along with two assistant secretaries of state, an assistant secretary of defense and the President himself. Bush's speech was regularly interrupted by cheering and chants of "Four more years!" The meeting of the Jewish community's most prominent voice on Capitol Hill may as well have been a Republican political rally.

These events reveal a stubborn political fact: that AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents, along with their powerful fellow travelers, Christian Zionists, have forged a bipartisan consensus in Washington that Middle East policy must privilege the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel. In practice, this solid consensus means putting Israeli security before peace; supporting even such extreme Israeli measures as the separation wall and assassinations; and delegitimizing the Palestinian leadership. In AIPAC's view, even Bush's unambitious Middle East "road map" conceded too much to the Palestinians. Until the late 1980s, when the PLO publicly affirmed Israel's right to exist, such positions may truly have represented the vast majority of American Jews. But ever since the 1993 Oslo Accord proved that negotiations were possible, surveys have consistently found that 50 to 60 percent of American Jews favor ending the occupation and dismantling settlements in return for peace.

The trouble is, AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents never fully embraced the Oslo thaw, and once peace talks failed in 2000, they snapped back to their hard-line stance. The combination of Palestinian suicide bombings, the election of Sharon, the ultimate hawk, as prime minister and Bush's with-us-or-against-us "war on terror" allowed the AIPAC consensus to harden throughout the Jewish establishment. After 9/11, United Jewish Communities, the joint Jewish charity, decided to direct funds to Jewish settlers for the first time. And 2002 was a banner year: At a pro-Israel rally in Washington that April, busloads of demonstrators from Jewish social-service agencies and Hillels (the network of Jewish campus organizations) booed Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz for speaking about Palestinian suffering, and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and other groups published manuals on how to discredit "anti-Israel propaganda" on campuses. "Arafat had a chance to move toward peace and he rejected it," says Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the leader of the 1.5 million–strong Reform Jewish movement, and one of mainstream Jewry's most outspoken voices against settlement expansion. "We rallied to Israel's side out of the sense that it was the right thing to do, and out of real anger toward the Palestinians." The joke used to be two rabbis, three congregations; over the past two or three years it's become 6 million American Jews, one official opinion.

But tens of thousands of American Jews have had a very different response to the failed talks and the new Palestinian uprising. They began to ask heretical questions about whether former Prime

Esther Kaplan is the author of With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House *(New Press), which will be published in October.*

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Minister Ehud Barak, or Oslo, had really offered Palestinians a viable state, and whether the harsh occupation was to blame for rising Palestinian anger. Most American Jewish peace organizations had closed up shop during the hopeful Oslo years, so these marginalized doves started almost from scratch, launching dozens of local and national organizations dedicated to ending the occupation. "Since the intifada began, the mantra in the American Jewish community was that Israel's existence was being threatened and we had to stand by the government of Israel no matter what it did. This idea, brilliantly manipulated by the Israeli government, became sacrosanct," says Marcia Freedman, a former Knesset member who co-founded one of these new groups, the Chicago-based Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, in 2002. "There just happens to be a very right-wing government in Israel that does not support a two-state solution, so this lockstep solidarity gave that government carte blanche support." The new grassroots efforts are determined to revoke that carte blanche. Brit Tzedek already has chapters in twenty-seven cities; Michael Lerner's Berkeley-based Tikkun Community and the Oakland-based Jewish Voice for Peace, which just went national in May, have joined the few remaining older peace outfits like Americans for Peace Now (APN) and Arthur Waskow's Philadelphia-based Shalom Center to create an incipient counterforce, which exists almost entirely outside official Jewish channels.

'There is a silencing going on at the local level by American Jewish institutions that is very unhealthy.' —Marcia Freedman, Brit Tzedek

Some of the new groups, like Brit Tzedek and Tikkun, consider themselves to be strongly pro-Israel but seek to radically redefine the term. ("So the definition of being pro-Israel is to be pro-Sharon?" asks Tikkun's Deborah Kory. "Well, maybe assassinating a guy in a wheelchair is not the best thing for Israel.") Others, like New York City's Jews Against the Occupation, define themselves as pro-Jewish and pro-Palestinian, and are open to the idea of a single, binational state. Most of the new organizations are explicitly Jewish, but American Jewish activists have also been central players in the founding of multiethnic organizations like the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), which sends international observers, about a fifth of whom are American Jews, into the occupied territories, and the Washington, DC–based US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, which advocates divestment from Israel bonds. And they are becoming increasingly visible. In March one older peace group, Rabbis for Human Rights of North America, sent an open letter to Sharon protesting Israel's house-demolition policy, which was signed by 400 rabbis, including leaders of some of the largest congregations in the country; in April Brit Tzedek organized 10,000 US Jews to sign another open letter, this one calling on Israel and the United States to fund the relocation of Jewish settlers from the occupied territories to Israel.

Over the past three years, these organizations have lobbied Congress, picketed Israeli consulates, initiated campus divestment campaigns, set up informational listservs and held hundreds of vigils and teach-ins. Though they lack support from major Jewish donors or Jewish foundations, their numbers are fast approaching AIPAC's 65,000 members (APN has some 25,000 supporters, Brit Tzedek another 17,000 and so on), and polls show that there is tremendous room for growth. When former Israeli and Palestinian officials crafted the Geneva Accord last year as a model peace agreement, an APN survey found that five times more American Jews supported the plan than opposed it. AIPAC, on the other hand, dismissed Geneva as irrelevant and used its political muscle to block a mild Congressional resolution applauding the "courage and vision" of those who fashioned it. It turns out that far from being more unified than ever in support of Israeli policies, American Jews are as polarized on Israel as Americans as a whole are polarized about George W. Bush.

The divide is not only political but existential. AIPAC, the ADL and the Conference of Presidents see Palestinian suicide bombs as part of a global attack on Jews that includes everything from the murder of Daniel Pearl to the spike in anti-Jewish attacks in France; in their view, Palestinian attacks on Israelis are fueled by hatred of Jews. The peace groups believe that Israel, with one of the world's most powerful militaries, can't claim its existence is at risk, and they see in Israel's occupation, separation wall and collective punishment a moral challenge to the Jewish soul. News and commentary circulated by the two camps, even regarding the same events, bear almost no relation to each other. In late May, as the Israeli army's Operation Rainbow crested in Gaza, ISM e-mails included an eyewitness account of Israeli soldiers shooting tear gas at children and a graphic description of tanks firing shells into a peaceful demonstration in Rafah. E-mails from the Conference of Presidents, on the other hand, told of tunnels used by Palestinians to smuggle weapons and a Jewish settler whose wife and four daughters were killed by terrorists. In the eyes of peaceniks, such as Anita Altman, a Jewish communal professional in New York City, mainstream Jewish institutions are concerned so exclusively with Israeli security that "we've lost the capacity to recognize the other and to acknowledge Palestinans' humanity." In the eyes of establishment Jewish leaders, such as Ernest Weiner, director of the American Jewish Committee's San Francisco chapter, the doves, by concerning themselves primarily with the rights of Palestinians under occupation, have become "nothing more than a mouthpiece of the Arabs." One of these camps has positioned itself as the legitimate voice of American Jews, and has the ear of both parties in Washington; the other, the anti-occupation majority, is being quashed.

Charney Bromberg, executive director of the peace and civil rights organization Meretz USA, an affiliate of Israel's left-wing Meretz Party, calls this phenomenon "the Israeli disease," in which a handful of far-right ideologues dictate policy for the moderate masses; he warns that it has now taken root in American Jewish politics. Palestinian suicide bombers and the war on terror, he argues, have increased the right's leverage. "You get this sense in the Jewish community that we're under siege and anyone who challenges the consensus is a traitor who has to be purged," Bromberg says. "The right has the capacity to instantly inflate any expression of civil discourse, doubt or questioning into an act of disloyalty." Historian Michael Staub, author of *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America*, says this split in the Jewish community between an institutional mainstream and a liberal/left alternative dates to the early 1970s, when young

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Jews, who disproportionately populated the New Left, challenged the major Jewish organizations over Vietnam, urban poverty and assimilation. The difference, says Staub, is that then, when dissidents picketed a synagogue or stormed a meeting of the Jewish Federation, the mainstream leadership scrambled to set up meetings. Now, with dissent centered around Israel, mainstream communal leaders attack anti-occupation protesters as self-hating Jews or take steps to shut them out of the debate entirely. "There is a silencing going on at the local level by American Jewish institutions that is very unhealthy," says Brit Tzedek's Freedman.

New to Jewish religious practice and even newer to Israel/Palestine politics, University of Richmond junior Jilian Redford, 20, quickly discovered the Jewish establishment's line in the sand. The elected president of her campus Hillel, she tried to pull together a balanced panel discussion on the conflict, but soon butted heads with her supervisor at the local Jewish Community Center, Lisa Looney. Looney proposed a particular professor as a speaker, and Redford declined, calling the professor "racist" for private comments she'd made that Palestinians, unlike Jews, have an inherent capacity to kill people in cold blood. "Lisa was extremely taken aback by me using such a strong word," Redford recalls. Redford's second strike—there wouldn't be a third—was her angry response in February to several e-mails she had received from the Israeli Embassy: "Could you please stop sending me email after email about radical Zionist propaganda?" she wrote, adding that it was wrong to "encourage us to hate our Palestinian neighbors in Israel." Three weeks later, after a hostile meeting where Looney insisted that Redford apologize to the embassy, Looney dismissed Redford from her post. "I felt that all of my hard work had been completely overlooked because of my political views on Israel," Redford says. "It was like I revealed that I was from some other planet."

'We want to create a space where support for Palestinian rights is not seen as traitorous or self-hating.' —Lorne Lieb, JATO

Redford's experience follows a familiar pattern. Liz Harr, an activist with Jewish Students for Palestinian Rights at the University of Texas, was denied space at her campus Hillel in spring 2002 when she sought to organize a study group on the history of the conflict. Hillel program directors at UC Santa Cruz and Ithaca College resigned in frustration after being reprimanded for publishing articles supporting Israeli and Palestinian activism against the occupation. "We think the campus is a great place for there to be very open and contentious debate," says Wayne Firestone, director of Hillel International's Center for Israel Affairs. "But that doesn't give people unconditional rights to attack Israel in any manner or any fashion." In fact, Hillel distributes materials that offer "reactive strategies" for responding to "anti-Israel" events, such as a report from GOP pollster Frank Luntz that details how to better market the "pro-Israel" message to Jewish youth.

Hillel is hardly the only enforcer of a narrow "pro-Israel" orthodoxy. After a four-year battle to gain entry, two dovish organizations, Meretz USA and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, were rejected for membership in the Conference of Presidents in December 2002. Some of the conference's most significant organizations, including the Reform movement, supported Meretz's application, but on the Conference of Presidents, it's one organization, one vote, and executive vice president Malcolm Hoenlein (who likes to refer to the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria") had stacked the committee with right-wing groups. When Jewish Voice for Peace applied for a booth at the Bay Area's biggest Jewish community event of the year, Israel in the Ballpark, its application was rejected; the local Jewish Community Relations Council told JVP's program director, Liat Weingart, that JVP didn't sufficiently support Israel. When Drorah Setel, a Seattle rabbi affiliated with the local Jewish organization Pursue the Peace, showed up at a local pro-Israel rally in April 2002 carrying a sign supportive of both Palestinians and Israelis, a representative of the ADL, one of the rally organizers, insisted to police that she was a counterdemonstrator who should be removed; she ended up under arrest. Michael Bernstein, who led the young-adult program at the American Jewish Committee's San Francisco chapter, was dismissed from his voluntary post after he organized a panel discussion on the prospects for peace in Israel/Palestine in which two out of three speakers reflected a left perspective; according to Bernstein, chapter director Ernest Weiner charged up to him at the event and accused him, in profane terms, of bias (Weiner insists that Bernstein left of his own accord).

The consensus is manufactured in more subtle ways as well. For that right-wing pro-Israel rally in Washington, buses at many Jewish federations and Hillels were free, memos about it went out on organizational letterhead and attendance counted as a workday. Employees of such organizations report being strongly discouraged, on the other hand, from sending out notices about peace vigils from work e-mail accounts. "We hear from people constantly, staffers at mainstream Jewish institutions, reporters at Jewish papers and rabbis who say in hushed tones, 'I agree with you, but I can't say anything,'" says Cecilie Surasky, a spokesperson for JVP. "A rabbi will say, 'I totally support you, but my congregation is too conservative'; then a synagogue member will say, 'I can't say anything because my rabbi is too conservative.' There's an incredible amount of fear." Marcia Freedman of Brit Tzedek says that when she speaks to Jewish audiences, the room is typically split between supporters of the Sharon government and supporters of a negotiated peace, "but the pro-Israeli-government half has no idea about the other half."

Rosenthal of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the lobbying arm of local Jewish federations across the country, says that "the issue of how big is our tent and how civil is our dissent is the question of our time." At JCPA's annual conference in February, several hundred people packed a forum on dialogue and dissent over Israel. "We heard most poignantly from students, who said, 'I want to be able to ask questions and not be called an anti-Semite,'" Rosenthal recalls. The divide has become so pronounced that both sides have begun to address it as a crisis in its own right. Brit Tzedek has launched a Listening Project, and Jews Against the Occupation held a national Day of Debate on June 6; both entail small group encounters where the full range of views on Israel/Palestine can be heard. "We want to create a space where support for Palestinian rights is not seen as traitorous or self-hating," says JATO's Lorne Lieb, "but rather as

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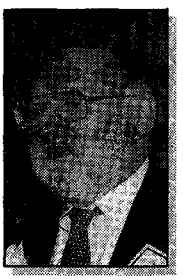

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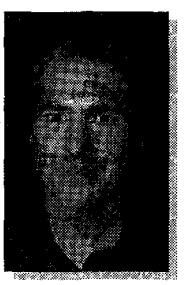

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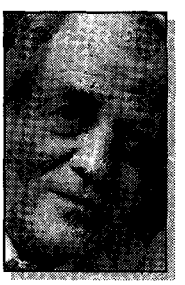

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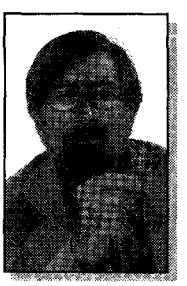

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Dec. 5	Sun	Ft. Lauderdale, Florida		5:00PM
Dec. 6	Mon	Day at Sea		
Dec. 7	Tue	Day at Sea		
Dec. 8	Wed	Phillipsburg, St. Maarten	8:00 AM	6:00 PM
Dec. 9	Thu	Road Town, Tortola	7:00 AM	4:00 PM
Dec. 10	Fri	Day at Sea		
Dec. 11	Sat	Half Moon Cay, Bahamas	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
Dec. 12	Sun	Ft. Lauderdale, Florida	8:00 AM	

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something people can think about and talk to each other about." Hillel will roll out a similar campaign timed for the fall holiday of Sukkot, which will feature intimate conversations where, Wayne Firestone says, "students on the right will have to listen respectfully to students on the left and vice versa."

But such tentative efforts to pry open space for Jewish debate is unlikely to tear down the artificial AIPAC consensus anytime soon. When the Tikkun Community brought some 350 activists to Capitol Hill in April to lobby members of Congress to support a return to negotiations, recalls co-chair Michael Lerner, "there was an astonishing openness—behind closed doors." But most members said AIPAC's presence, both on the Hill and in their home districts, was overwhelming, especially in tandem with Israel hawks on the Christian right. "One member of Congress said it even feels dangerous to meet with us, because they have such good radar screens that they find out almost immediately," Lerner says.

His finger to the wind, John Kerry has uncritically endorsed Bush's enthusiasm for Sharon; while he once spoke somewhat critically of the wall Sharon is erecting deep inside the West Bank, Kerry now wholeheartedly endorses it as a necessary security measure. "The unwritten rule," says APN president Debrah DeLee, "is don't let anyone get to the right of you on Israel." The math is simple: Jews on the right will vote on the single issue of Israel, but liberal Jews vote on a range of issues. So for political candidates, tacking to the right is all gain, no pain.

Over and over, activists like Freedman have been told by sympathetic elected officials, "We support your positions, but we need the telephone calls, the faxes, the letters to the editor, the visits to our office in the home districts." Jewish anti-occupation forces are slowly getting the message. In July Brit Tzedek will post an open letter to the next President asking for an aggressive commitment to push for a final-status Israeli-Palestinian agreement; the organization is now collecting signatures from American Jews. The US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation has just published a first-ever dovish voter guide, in which members of Congress who support the occupation get a negative score; and Tikkun is working on a private letter to Kerry from peace activists across the country.

At the very least, their presence has exposed the lack of unanimous US Jewish support for Sharon, and that may itself have salutary effects. Cecilie Surasky of JVP says her organization's Jewish presence in alliances for Palestinian rights has opened up the space for other dissenters, mentioning that, with JVP's support, Catholic investors in Caterpillar felt emboldened to introduce a shareholder resolution against the military use of its bulldozers in the occupied territories. "For Americans to be persuaded [to support the Palestinian cause]," says Hany Khalil, organizing coordinator for United for Peace and Justice, a national antiwar organization that opposes the Israeli occupation, "we have to build support across all sectors of the United States, and that will never happen without a significant and visible split within the Jewish community." ■

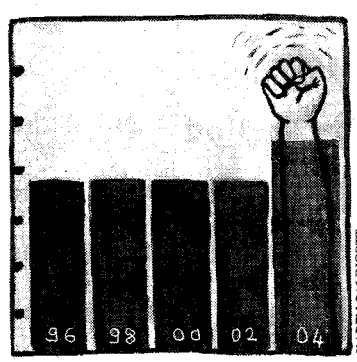
SEEING THE LIMITS OF LIVING-WAGE LAWS, ACTIVISTS SEEK A RAISE FOR ALL WORKERS.

Minimum Security

BOBBI MURRAY

what WORKS

This article is part of the "What Works" series, which explores effective strategies for improving people's lives through progressive social change. —The Editors



Over the past ten years, a host of scrappy grassroots campaigns across the country have successfully pushed through living-wage ordinances in 112 cities and counties. The individual wins are significant, but they add up to a big-picture victory, too—the expression "living wage" has seeped into the national discourse, along with the notion that working families shouldn't have to rely on public assistance or private charity to make it from month to month.

Yet the federal minimum wage remains stalled for the eighth year in a row at $5.15 an hour—a shocking $10,712 annually for fifty-two weeks of full-time work. This, of course, at the same time the Bush Administration unblushingly escorts the wealthiest Americans onto the tax-break gravy train.

"Certainly $5.15 an hour is not a living wage," scoffs Robert Pollin, economics professor at the University of Massachusetts and one of the nation's leading experts on the economics of living-wage law. If the minimum wage had been raised with inflation and the productivity rate since 1968, when the minimum wage was at its peak, Pollin says, it would be $14.50 an hour. Activists have long recognized the stalemate at the federal level that has arrested the minimum wage at subpar standards, and the living wage was an attempt to remedy that.

Local living-wage laws may have moral power, but they are limited in actual scope. Early living-wage efforts pegged the wage rate around a modest $7.50 an hour and raised the pay of a relatively small number of workers—those employed by companies holding contracts with a city or that receive municipal subsidies. Workers who toil in notoriously low-wage private-sector jobs—filling orders at Micky D's or stocking shelves at the local big-box store—haven't been in on the boost.

Fair-wage activists have been well aware of these shortcomings. As the living-wage movement marks its tenth year, organizers are looking to cast a wider net and cover greater numbers

Bobbi Murray lives in Los Angeles and writes frequently on economic justice issues.

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of employees with each new measure. The ultimate hope is to use local political openings to exert upward pressure on wages. "With the first generation of living-wage laws, they learned how to do it, how to set the terms of the debate," says Pollin. "Now they're ready for the next step."

That next step is a push for minimum-wage laws that affect all (or most) low-wage workers in a given city. In 2003 activists in Santa Fe won a law requiring nearly all employers to pay at least $8.50 an hour; in San Francisco, the movement won a living-wage law affecting all employers with more than ten workers. Madison, Wisconsin, followed suit this year, albeit at a lower rate, when the City Council there passed a minimum wage starting at $5.76, set to phase up to $7.75 in a city with a somewhat lower cost of living. San Francisco's new ordinance affects some 50,000 workers (compared with 12,000 under a previous living-wage ordinance there); while Santa Fe's covers 30,000 and Madison's 17,200.

Washington, DC, was the first city to pass a minimum wage, back in 1994 when the living-wage movement was just taking flight. The District pegged the local minimum at $1 an hour above the federal level, where it remains.

Then ACORN New Orleans launched a six-year campaign in 1996, which culminated in a minimum-wage ordinance that set earnings in the Big Easy at $6.15 an hour in 2002. Louisiana has no minimum-wage law on the books, and the measure was designed to directly benefit some 50,000 workers, many of whom are the backbone of New Orleans's tourist industry. The victory swiftly crumbled as the legislature, urged on by business interests, overrode local sentiment (some 65 percent of voters approved the initiative) and passed a state law that banned Louisiana municipalities from establishing their own wage levels—a legal demolition of the New Orleans measure.

The city minimum wage is an end run around Washington gridlock, which has arrested the federal minimum at a subpar level.

So far, the newest measures have been safe from this type of assault. Neither New Mexico nor California has pre-emptive laws in place, and state legislatures appear unlikely to pass them in the near future, while Wisconsin's Democratic governor vetoed a similar measure promoted by a Republican-dominated legislature.

Wade Rathke, the founder and chief organizer of ACORN, and an optimist even after the legal defeat in Louisiana in 2002, sees the city-level minimum wage as a clever end run around Washington gridlock. "You're starting to see some real traction for city minimum-wage laws," Rathke says, and points to the Bay Area as an example of the local measures' potential. Now that San Francisco has a minimum wage, he says, cities adjacent to San Francisco can pass similar measures and set a new, higher wage floor across an entire region. Indeed, Bay Area activists are talking about moving beyond San Francisco to win a minimum-wage "trifecta," including Oakland, Berkeley and Emeryville.

The recent minimum-wage fights in Santa Fe, Madison and San Francisco differed significantly in battlefield terrain and tactics, and all face different opposition tactics.

In Santa Fe, a city of 62,200 with a large low-wage tourist industry and high cost of living, a tight network of labor and community activists, the Santa Fe Living Wage Network, spearheaded the movement, which focused on the City Council. A former councilmember initiated the proposal after a union grocery store where he worked closed down and reopened non-union. Phone campaigns and delegations, along with a local newspaper ad with more than 1,500 endorsements, put the squeeze on pivotal wavering councilors. The local Roman Catholic diocese in this heavily Catholic city bought its own ad and distributed flyers at Sunday mass, while labor stepped in with staff and phones. The opposition, the hotel and restaurant interests, lacked the force and numbers of the proponents. The vote in favor, in February 2003, was 7 to 1.

Unlike in Santa Fe, the law in San Francisco was passed via ballot measure. The campaign to collect 26,000 qualifying signatures in two weeks gave the measure momentum, says John Eller, the head organizer there for ACORN, and so did the 2003 mayoral primary (in which the centrist Democrat, Gavin Newsom, was pressured into supporting it by a field of more progressive candidates, including Green Matt Gonzalez, who warmly embraced the initiative). The two major papers editorialized against the minimum wage, but other than that, the opposition lay relatively low. Even big businesses with a large stake in the fight, McDonald's and Burger King, refrained from deep-pocket intervention, says longtime Bay Area activist Randy Shaw, author of *The Activist's Handbook*. The local restaurants are franchises, and any aggressive action by their corporate parents in such a politicized community would have run the risk of backlash. Unlike in Santa Fe, most San Francisco unions initially hung back, fearing the measure couldn't pass, and financial support from the community was anemic; but key resources came from a local businessman, Barry Hermanson, who not only financed a study to determine the potential costs to local businesses (which, at the $8.50-an-hour rate, were negligible) but bankrolled the signature drive and the campaign itself.

In Madison the living-wage effort began as a ballot campaign but morphed into a City Council–focused push, reports Austin King, himself an alderperson and a member of the Madison Fair Wage Campaign. King explains that with the Council as a field of engagement, "they can't out-research us, they can't out-data us—but they could outspend us in a referendum." The seven-month fight featured a couple of cliffhanger moments, one when Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle appeared ready to sign a pre-emptive measure that would have nullified anything passed in Madison, and another just days before the vote, in which the mayor appeared poised to settle for a watered-down version of the ordinance—but the fair-wage supporters managed to hold the line through grassroots e-mail and phone campaigns.

Neither the fledgling Madison law nor the one in San Francisco has been legally challenged, although San Francisco could have been negatively affected by a court case just up the road. Cintas Corporation, which holds a contract to clean city uniforms for the city of Hayward, faced a lawsuit by workers claiming back wages under Hayward's living-wage law. Fortunately for the workers, a judge refused to dismiss their suit and affirmed the rights of cities to adopt local living-wage laws, in a decision on May 21, 2004.

But the Santa Fe measure faces a lawsuit by several plaintiffs,

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among them a group called New Mexicans for Free Enterprise, (backed by the national restaurant-industry organization), which has attacked the living-wage movement from its inception. The City of Santa Fe is defending the statute, with support from Paul Sonn of the Brennan Center for Justice in New York (who has crafted and defended living-wage laws around the country), along with the top-flight international law firm Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton and Garrison, working pro bono. In December a judge rejected one of the lawsuit's central claims—that only the state, not the city, can set a minimum wage—but the law is in abeyance until the district court rules on other issues. Morty Simon, of the Santa Fe Living Wage Network, scoffs at the lawsuit as "frivolous" and says there is still plenty of on-the-ground work being done to promote a minimum wage in Santa Fe. Some 215 local businesses have signed on to voluntarily comply with the Council-approved measure, he says, and a Living Wage Network–supported low-wage-worker organizing campaign has boosted wages at a local supermarket by at least $1.50 an hour.

It's still an open question whether the city minimum-wage movement will take flight and elevate wages on a broad scale for private-sector employees trapped in a Wal-Mart economy. And state-level fights are key. Sonn says that there is no legal impediment preventing states from passing legislation to gut local ordinances retroactively. (Currently, there is legislation in place in at least ten states to preclude local minimum-wage hikes.) As much as grassroots organization has propelled the movement to success locally, activists will need to marshal considerable statewide political clout to protect those hard-won victories.

And the movement has gone on the offensive in some states, where activists are pushing to raise the state minimum above the paltry federal level. In Florida, ACORN is close to collecting enough signatures to put a measure on the state ballot for November that would raise the state wage to $6.15 an hour, with annual raises, and in New York, the Working Families Party is pushing to boost the state minimum to $7.10.

If they do well in November, Democrats could finally make headway on a federal minimum-wage raise. Candidate John Kerry has declared support for a raise, creating a potential opening for local and state-level campaigns to exert upward pressure. Wage-hike opponents, despite all their resources, often move with less agility than the grassroots, giving local organizations the potential to move minimum-wage boosts through contiguous cities and counties. But between the New Mexico lawsuit and the state-level challenges in Louisiana and Wisconsin, the living wage is still up for grabs. In many areas, fair-wage activists have momentum—not to mention morality—on their side, but as the stakes rise, their adversaries are bringing out the big guns. One thing's for sure: Neither side will go down quietly. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
As Johnny Carson is reputed to have said about one of his potential replacements, "The man couldn't ad lib a fart."

But the First Amendment must apply to everyone, even Howard Stern. Is this a great country, or what? RICHARD W. BRAY

Grandville, Mich.

■ *The Nation* crossed the line with its Howard Stern F*CKED BY THE F*CC cover. While I am all for free speech, I live in a small Midwest Bible Belt town, and the postmen talk. Seriously, I like to keep my liberal views under cover. There are Bush lovers galore here, and I feel like I don't live in the land of the free anymore—and I really do want to continue to hear what's really going on in the world! ROBIN MCLAUGHLIN

New York City

■ Kudos to Jeff Jarvis for his thoughtful, honest assessment of the campaign against Howard Stern. Jarvis not only supports Stern's right to free speech but also the validity of Stern's speech itself. Stern may not be the voice of a progressive agenda, but his activism against Bush and his policies place him clearly on our team. That he doesn't fit the progressive mold perfectly should remind us that those who desire truth, justice and freedom are most often as complex as the principles they espouse. TYLER FEREIRA

Cupertino, Calif.

■ First Jeff Jarvis allows *Advertising Age* to define the terms of our culture war, then he goes on to conflate government censorship intended to protect the powerful with speech codes intended to protect the weak. Howard Stern's brand of offensive speech rests on exclusion and derision, particularly of women. Jarvis doesn't seem to recognize the difference between offensive speech that challenges authority or convention and offensive speech that indulges bigotry and sustains stereotypes. As a society, we continually revise what constitutes legally or socially acceptable speech while trying to maintain the bedrock principle that the powerless must have a voice. When we find we've created monsters like the two young DJs who broadcast a young man's pre-death screams and joked about it, I hope the majority of us would agree that it's past time to alter the media culture that nurtured them. Of course we should all support Stern's struggle against censorship while working to change the laws that have allowed a few companies to flood the airwaves with these childish and resentful men, but I'm sick to death of the self-styled rebels who reduce complicated free-speech issues to a matter of Authoritarian Right/Puritanical Left vs. Really Cool Guys. As citizens of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia know, radio can be a force with violent consequences. K. SHOWALTER

Los Angeles

■ Thanks for Jeff Jarvis's excellent piece on the FCC's attack on free speech and the unconstitutional indecency legislation pending in Congress. AFTRA, the union that represents over 80,000 television and radio announcers, actors and sound-recording artists nationwide, has been deeply involved in fighting this siege.

As Jarvis discussed, the bills pending in Congress are dangerous for performers because the standards are vague and undefined, with the apparent purpose of pressuring artists to self-censor. The vast majority of these artists earn only modest incomes in a very fickle job market, and the threat of a $500,000 fine is more than enough to cause self-censorship. These bills seek to punish artists far more harshly than the companies that control the programming. The Senate bill, for example, permits the FCC to reduce a fine because of a broadcast company's "inability to pay," but there is no such leniency for artists. While the bill contains a graduated fine structure for companies of $250,000 for a first offense going up to $500,000 for a third or later one, artists are crushed by a $500,000 fine for a first offense. Artists are also facing corporate attempts to insert "indemnification" clauses in their contracts that would require them to pay any FCC fines imposed on their employers, in addition to any fines imposed on the artist.

While AFTRA has been fighting at the bargaining table, in Congress and before the FCC, what has been missing is public outrage at this latest form of government censorship. With a little luck—and a lot of public support—perhaps these terrible bills can wither on the vine now that the first wave of self-righteous demagoguery has passed. JOHN P. CONNOLLY
AFTRA National President

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(Continued From Page 8)
bers of the UN Security Council, including the United States and more than 130 countries worldwide, are bound to prevent and punish genocide. The convention names genocide as a crime in international law, describing it as the commission of acts with "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

The Security Council continues to hesitate on Darfur, largely because of the economic and diplomatic interests of its permanent members, who don't wish to antagonize Khartoum. Whether the UN can be spurred to action will depend largely on the United States, and Washington has an obligation to act. One reason is its treaty obligations under the Genocide Convention. Another is its involvement in Sudan's peace process, supported by an eclectic domestic constituency, including groups ranging from the evangelical right to the Congressional Black Caucus. A third is the unique US intelligence capacity to track militia activity in Darfur as well as the movements of the displaced. Finally, it has 1,800 troops in nearby Djibouti, some of whom could be mobilized quickly to lead a multinational force to secure the region, to facilitate humanitarian assistance and to enforce the cease-fire until a UN peacekeeping force can be assembled.

When George W. Bush hosted the G-8 summit in June, the leaders of the world's richest and most powerful countries merely urged the government of Sudan to disarm the militias. Were this tragedy unfolding in Europe, their summit would have focused on little other than intervention. Unless there is an immediate military intervention in Darfur, up to a million people could die this year. We should have learned from Rwanda that to stop genocide, Washington must first say the word.

SALIH BOOKER AND ANN-LOUISE COLGAN

Salih Booker is executive director and Ann-Louise Colgan is assistant director for policy analysis and communications at Africa Action, the oldest Africa advocacy organization in the United States. Africa Action has launched a petition (www.africaaction.org), supported by the Congressional Black Caucus, that calls on Secretary of State Colin Powell to name the genocide in Darfur and to support immediate intervention to stop the killing.

Ralph Reed's Gamble

When Ralph Reed was the boyish director of the Christian Coalition, he made opposition to gambling a major plank in his "family values" agenda, calling gambling "a cancer on the American body politic" that was "stealing food from the mouths of children." But now, a broad federal investigation into lobbying abuses connected to gambling on Indian reservations has unearthed evidence that Reed has been surreptitiously working for an Indian tribe with a large casino it sought to protect—and that Reed was paid with funds laundered through two firms to try to keep his lucrative involvement secret. Reed has always operated behind the scenes, and apparently he didn't want to risk becoming a humbled hypocrite like his right-wing cohorts William Bennett and Rush Limbaugh.

News accounts of the emerging scandal have focused on the two main figures under investigation: lawyer/lobbyist Jack Abramoff and Mike Scanlon, House GOP majority leader Tom DeLay's former spokesman and head of two campaign and public relations companies. But Reed has managed to slither below the media's radar—until now.

Neither he, Abramoff or Scanlon returned phone calls.

In early 2002 the Coushatta tribe of Louisiana was desperately trying to kill a planned competing casino that the rival Jena Band wanted to build in southwestern Louisiana. This new casino would have broken the Coushattas' geographical monopoly and cost the tribe—whose casino was grossing $300 million a year— an estimated $1 billion in gambling revenue over five years. The Jena Band had hired former GOP national chairman Haley Barbour to make sure its casino compact was approved by the heavily politicized Bureau of Indian Affairs. So the Coushatta tribe, which already was in the process of paying Abramoff and Scanlon some $32 million over three years, also hired Reed, according to three witnesses and documents obtained by *The Nation*. This was not a crime, just furtive hypocrisy.

Two casino industry lobbyists—Philip Thompson and Bill Grimes—say they were in a meeting in Baton Rouge early in 2002 and heard William Worfel, vice chair of the Coushatta tribe, say he was hiring Reed to lobby for the tribe with the BIA to neutralize the influence Barbour had with the Bush Administration. According to Thompson, Worfel, who also did not return phone calls, "said he was putting Reed on his payroll. He said, 'If they have Barbour, we need Reed.'" A third casino lobbyist at the meeting, who requested anonymity, says Reed helped "mobilize Christian radio and ministers against the casino." But, he says, "He wanted to be able to deny it. Or if it came out, he wanted to be able to claim he was against the Jena casino, without anybody knowing he was getting paid by a bigger tribe with a bigger gambling operation."

The documents obtained by *The Nation* show that Reed sent bills to Abramoff and Scanlon and that one of his consulting companies, Century Strategies of Duluth, Georgia, received $250,000 from one of Scanlon's companies, Capitol Campaign Strategies. An invoice to Abramoff from another Reed company, Capitol Media, for $100,000, states only that the payment is for "Louisiana Project Mgmt. Fee." (The main thrust of the Justice Department investigation involves money laundering among Scanlon, Abramoff and Republican campaigns. Abramoff was fired by his firm for not disclosing $10 million in payments from Scanlon.)

Reed's involvement with the casino effort followed his departure from the Christian Coalition in 1997 and his reinvention of himself as a corporate lobbyist and campaign hatchet man. One of his first clients was the Enron Corporation—a deal arranged by Karl Rove when George W. Bush was starting to think about running for President in 2000. Rove wasn't ready to put Reed directly on a campaign payroll but presumably wanted to cultivate good will from Reed toward the coming Bush candidacy. Enron paid Reed's Century Strategies more than $300,000 to generate support for energy deregulation. In the 2000 GOP presidential primary, Reed justified his big Enron fee by helping to smear John McCain during the South Carolina primary. Now McCain's

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COMMENT

Indian Affairs subcommittee is investigating Indian gambling in the context of lobbying abuses, kickbacks and money laundering, with public hearings scheduled for early September.

Reed is in charge of Bush's 2004 election campaign in the Southeast, including Florida. In 2000, he was paid almost $3.7 million for helping Bush. In 1995, when he was still exploiting intolerance and fear, *Time* did a story on him that included the cover line "The right hand of God." Today God's right hand seems to be holding dice and a bloody political hatchet.

JACK NEWFIELD

Jack Newfield, a senior Nation Institute fellow, is working on a long-term investigation of right-wing lobbyists and Indian gambling.

De-Spoiling the Election

In 2000, Al Gore beat George W. Bush in the state of New Mexico by a mere 366 votes—a slimmer margin than in Florida. Ralph Nader polled 21,251 votes. Nader not only nearly cost Gore the state but forced him to expend valuable resources there in the campaign's waning days, draining his effort from Florida.

Flash forward to 2004. Once again the Democratic and Republican candidates are locked in a tight race nationally. Once again Nader's entry into the race threatens Kerry's hold on New Mexico. And once again two candidates who share many views and bases of support—and who ideally could work together to challenge George W. Bush on the economy, the Iraq war, the future of Social Security, the environment, political reform and healthcare—instead are players in a Cain and Abel drama, courtesy of the all-or-nothing, winner-take-all nature of our presidential elections.

Yet there is a way out—if New Mexico Democrats decide they want one. Democrats control New Mexico's State Legislature, and one of Kerry's leading vice presidential contenders, Bill Richardson, is governor. Democrats could pass into law—right now—a runoff or instant-runoff system with a majority requirement for President, to insure that the center left does not split its vote between Kerry and Nader.

Here's how. The Constitution mandates the antiquated Electoral College system for electing the President, in which there are elections in fifty states and the District of Columbia rather than one national election. But the Constitution specifically delegates to states the method of choosing its electors. States historically have used a variety of different approaches, including letting the State Legislature appoint electors, as Florida Republicans threatened to do in 2000. Nebraska and Maine, for example, award two electoral votes to the winner of the statewide vote and one vote to the winner of the popular vote in each Congressional district (a flawed approach that would boost Republicans if in place nationally).

The remaining states use a statewide winner-take-all plurality method whereby the highest vote-getter wins 100 percent of that state's electoral votes, even if that candidate wins less than a popular majority. With plurality voting, a majority of voters can split their vote among two or more candidates and end up winning nothing. Indeed, because of the presence of Nader and other candidates like Pat Buchanan, ten states in 2000 awarded all their electoral votes to a candidate who did not win a popular majority. Fully forty-nine of fifty states were won without a majority in 1992. It is the lack of a majority requirement that leads Nader and Kerry forces to clash so bitterly.

To be sure, Republicans may cry foul if New Mexico Democrats suddenly switch to a runoff system, but even if Democrats' action is self-interested, it's also in the public interest to protect majority rule and allow for voter choice. One approach would be to adopt a runoff system similar to that used in most presidential elections around the world, most Southern primaries and many local elections: A first round with all candidates would take place in New Mexico in early October. The top two finishers would face off in November, with the winner certain to have a majority.

Better still would be to adopt instant-runoff voting (IRV). Used in Ireland and Australia and recently adopted for city elections in San Francisco and for Congressional and gubernatorial nominations by the Utah Republican Party, IRV has drawn support from Howard Dean, Jesse Jackson Jr. and John McCain. By allowing voters to rank the candidates (for example, a 1 for Ralph Nader and a 2 for John Kerry), IRV can resolve the spoiler problem. Voters are liberated to vote for their favorite candidate without helping to elect their least favorite. IRV also saves candidates the campaign costs of a runoff election and preserves more voter choice in the decisive November election, when voter turnout is highest.

New Mexico's senate in fact already passed IRV legislation in 1999 in the wake of Democrats' loss of two Congressional seats, in part because of Green Party candidacies. Despite support from the AFL-CIO and Common Cause, the proposal died because of concerns about costs of implementing it and because some Democrats would rather destroy Greens than co-exist.

Democrats also call the shots in the presidential battleground states of Maine, West Virginia and Tennessee. With one vote of the legislature and a stroke of the governor's pen, these states could accommodate the reality of the Nader candidacy. What's stopping them?

While Ralph Nader may be ready to risk a repeat of 2000—and could do much more to make multiparty democracy a viable option by highlighting reforms like IRV—most Greens don't want to be spoilers. They consistently support reforming winner-take-all elections, and their presidential front-runner, David Cobb, promises to focus this fall on safe states, in recognition of the Greens' interest in defeating Bush.

But only Democrats and Republicans have the power to change the rules of the game. Democrats' failure to use that power begs the question: Would they rather engage in name-calling and suppressing candidacies, even at the risk of costing themselves the presidential election, than allow new political voices to join the fray? More people, Democrats and non-Democrats alike, should begin asking party leaders: Why not IRV?

STEVEN HILL AND ROB RICHIE

Steven Hill is a senior policy analyst with the Center for Voting and Democracy and author of Fixing Elections: The Failure of America's Winner Take All Politics. *Rob Richie is the center's executive director. Contact the center at www.fairvote.org.*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Searcher

HILTON ALS

WHERE I WAS FROM. By Joan Didion. Knopf. 226 pp. $23.

In 1965, nearly forty years before the publication of *Where I Was From*, her most recent and most sustained meditation on her native state of California, the novelist and essayist Joan Didion wrote "John Wayne: A Love Song." In the essay, Didion describes a trip she made to Estudio Churubusco, outside Mexico City. There a film was being shot—*The Sons of Katie Elder*, a western starring Dean Martin and John Wayne. For years before visiting the set, Wayne had loomed in Didion's imagination as the kind of man—a man emblematic of the Old West—who'd build a woman a home "at the bend in the river where the cottonwoods grow." That this was a line Wayne crooned in another movie Didion saw when she was a child did not make the image of the house, the cottonwoods, the bend in the river and Wayne's scripted intention any less real for her.

"As it happened I did not grow up to be the kind of woman who is the heroine in a Western," Didion writes. Nevertheless, "deep in that part of my heart where the artificial rain forever falls, that is still the line I wait to hear." But on that set just outside Mexico City, Didion not only found herself in the presence of a working myth, committed to make-believe—*Elder* was Wayne's 165th motion picture—but a working myth who was facing a very real and imminent physical threat. "There it was, the rumor, and after a while the headlines," writes Didion. "'I licked the Big C,' John Wayne announced, as John Wayne would, reducing those outlaw cells to the level of any other outlaws, but even so we all sensed that this would be the one unpredictable confrontation, the one shoot-out Wayne could lose." Cancer is not a movie. In the end, Wayne lost that particular battle, succumbing to lung and stomach cancer in 1979. And in the years since visiting Estudio Churubusco, Joan Didion has become the heroine of a western. But it is a post-modern one, scripted and directed by the writer herself, in which bluejeaned myths like John Wayne die, concrete has been poured over the cottonwood roots and the heroine's sensibility takes center stage.

In a way, Didion's four nonfiction collections—*Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968), *The White Album* (1979), *After Henry* (1992) and *Political Fictions* (2001)—can be read as a series, one whose emotional plot is a combination of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* and John Ford's *The Searchers*: witty, sad wariness as the outgrowth of a bruised romanticism. In these collections Didion, one of the most cinematic of contemporary authors, shows where her mind and heart take her. Estudio Churubusco in 1965 and Haight-Ashbury in 1967. Hawaii in the 1970s. The Los Angeles Municipal Court in 1989, where the movie producer Robert Evans was a defendant in a murder trial. The tarmac in various airports in New York, New Orleans and California throughout the 1990s, as assorted Democratic and Republican conventions played themselves out.

For Joan Didion, writing is an act of thinking and feeling with no pre-arranged plan for how it will turn out, if it turns out at all.

Like Wayne before her, Didion puts herself in the company of "outlaws." The people and places that attract her writer's eye have little if any relationship to what Didion was taught to believe in growing up in Sacramento, California's capital city, in the 1940s and '50s. There, she was the daughter of "conservative California Republicans (this was before the meaning of 'conservative'

Hilton Als, a staff writer for The New Yorker, *is the co-editor, with Darryl Turner, of* White Noise: An Eminem Reader *(Avalon).*

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changed) in a postwar boom economy," Didion writes in the foreword to *Political Fictions*. She continues:

> The people with whom I grew up were interested in low taxes, a balanced budget, and a limited government. They believed above all that a limited government had no business tinkering with the private or cultural life of its citizens. In 1964, in accord with these interests and beliefs, I voted, ardently, for Barry Goldwater. Had Goldwater remained the same age and continued running, I would have voted for him in every election thereafter. Instead, shocked and to a curious extent personally offended by the enthusiasm with which California Republicans who had jettisoned an authentic conservative (Goldwater) were rushing to embrace Ronald Reagan, I registered as a Democrat, the first member of my family (and perhaps in my generation still the only member) to do so.

Among the defining characteristics of a heroine in a western is her willingness to jettison her past—no matter what the personal cost—as she confronts her future through narrowed eyes. Moving ahead while looking back may seem like contradictory impulses, but they are not: The heroine in a western is defined by the complications inherent in being a moralist, stolid in her beliefs and "personally offended" by those who are not. She is Janus in a covered wagon.

Joan Didion was 30 years old in 1964. By then, she had been an editor at *Vogue* for some time. She had also written a number of pieces, mainly book reviews, for that organ of paleoconservatism, *National Review*. At the time, those respective institutions were a kind of comfort for the Westerner who had come east to write and make a name for herself. But to seek membership in an institution is death to a writer, particularly one with a penchant for—as the essayist Elizabeth Hardwick has remarked of Didion's fictional work—representing "the fracture and splinter in her characters' comprehension of the world." Didion's questioning intelligence is the outgrowth of experience and belief explored and tested, as opposed to living with blindly accepted precepts about anything. In her works of nonfiction she is especially interested in the moment when the piton of experience digs into her consciousness, fracturing and splintering whatever lies there, revealing what it may between the cracks. "That the time would come [when Didion, her husband and her child might be done away with] I never doubted, at least not in the inaccessible places of the mind where I seemed more and more to be living," writes Didion in her essay "The White Album," published after she had stopped writing for *National Review*, after she'd stopped working at *Vogue*, when she was living in Hollywood with her family and nothing made sense and random acts of violence against home and hearth, most spectacularly the 1969 Tate–La Bianca murders, "fulfilled" the paranoia of the time.

Had Didion been inured to her past and not cast her view toward the stony end of failed belief, she would not have become the writer she is, distrustful of the sentiment inherent in all narratives that purport to make sense of those abstractions called politics, or culture, or family history, or identity. Part of Didion's brilliance is her ability—her desire—to question who and what she is or was supposed to be by courting the dramatic uneasiness that arises when this former California girl—middle class, white and raised to assume that life was "whole"—found herself, for instance, in Eldridge Cleaver's sitting room in the late 1960s at a time when life was not whole for the former revolutionary either, since the FBI was looking for any excuse to blow him away along with his fellow Black Panthers.

Didion understands that tension—the engine that drives narrative—is not necessarily fueled by stories that people of her race and class have to tell but by those who, in some cases, may have a problem with her race and class. "'White slut comes into the park looking for the African man,' a black woman could say, her voice loud but still controversial, in the corridor outside the courtroom where, during the summer of 1990, the first three defendants in the Central Park attack...were tried on charges of attempted murder, assault, sodomy, and rape," Didion reports in her 1990 essay, "Sentimental Journeys." She goes on:

> "Boyfriend beats the shit out of her, they blame it on our boys," the woman could continue. "How about the roommate, anybody test his semen? No. He's white. They don't do it to each other." Glances could then flicker among those reporters and producers and courtroom sketch artists and photographers and cameramen and techs and summer interns who assembled daily at 111 Centre Street. Cellular phones could be picked up, a show of indifference.... The woman could then raise her voice: "White folk, all of them are devils, even those that haven't been born yet, they are *devils*. Little *demons*. I don't understand these devils, I guess they think this is *their court*."

Imagine what Didion could do with this black heroine in an urban shootout now, in light of the fact that the defendants in the Central Park jogger case were, in fact, not guilty of the crime they were accused of with such vehemence, a crime that raised such ire on both sides of the racial fence. One wonders, too, what the black heroine of this urban shootout would make of Didion's early class identification with those people who, "on the whole, hung out in gas stations," and who, as she wrote in one of her political essays, "were never destined to be...communicants in what we have come to call, when we want to indicate the traditional ways in which power is exchanged and the status quo maintained in the United States, 'the process.'"

Writers look—if they are up for it—to those stories that describe something of the self to the self. Sometimes, one can find the stories that speak to and of one's self in places and among people who bear little if any resemblance to who we are, or are supposed to be. What protects Didion from any accusations that she takes from the marginal what she needs to articulate her feelings of marginalization (in the manner, say, of Naipaul, of whom she is a great admirer) is her distrust of the "encouraging promise of narrative resolution." She does not believe, as Naipaul does, that things, as she has also written, "add up." To enter Eldridge Cleaver's flat, or the studio where the Doors are recording or not recording a song, or to watch Nancy Reagan buffing her governmental sheen in a rose garden, or to make a visit to San Quentin, or to visit El Salvador, or to try to make sense of the history of Miami—all of which Didion has done—with an "idea" of how things will turn out is to not be open to the experience. She understands, as few of her peers do, that writing amounts to the act of thinking and feeling and its subsequent articulation with no pre-arranged plan on how it will turn out, if it turns out at all. It is also observing, listening and resisting the very human temptation to draw conclusions, to wrap things up.

On a number of occasions, Didion has disclosed her fundamental insecurity vis-à-vis intellectualism—a distinctly American fear. In her 1976 piece "Why I Write" she states: "I am not a scholar. I am not in the least an intellectual, which is not to say that when I hear the word 'intellectual' I reach for my gun, but only to say that I do not think in abstracts. During the years when I was an undergraduate at Berkeley, I tried, with a kind of hopeless late-adolescent energy, to buy some temporary visa into the world of ideas, to forge for myself a mind

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that could deal with the abstract. In short, I tried to think. I failed."

For American writers of a certain generation, thinking is a distinctly European act. You are not a thinker if you do not get the Hegelian dialectic "right," or do not use Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* as a benchmark for what thinking should look like on the page. Didion's intellectualism—which has deepened with each successive book—is rooted, as she puts it, in "the specific...the tangible, to what was generally considered, by everyone I knew...the peripheral." To understand Didion's interest in the "peripheral," one must look into her insistence on one's belief, one's thought process, in a world that turns on the axis of fashion, whether political, intellectual or literary.

Where I Was From—a brilliant amalgamation of biography, literary criticism, social history and travel writing—is both a book about belief and a book about gender.

Raised a Protestant, Didion was born into a form of Christianity that, as Auden observed, "set out to replace the collective external voice of tradition by the internal voice of the individual conscience." It was this religion of self-reliance, she suggests, that guided her ancestors as they made their pilgrimage to the golden land from other parts of the country, a trek marked by the folly inherent in hope and delusion. The need for the crossings is never explained in Didion's book. She tells us of her maternal great-great-great-great-great grandmother, Elizabeth Scott, who was born in 1766, and who left the Virginia and Carolina frontiers with her husband and children, eventually dying on the Arkansas frontier. She tells us, too, of Elizabeth Scott's granddaughter, Nancy Hardin Cornwall, who in 1846 traveled "with the Donner-Reed party as far as the Humboldt Sink before cutting north for Oregon, where her husband, the Reverend Josephus Adamson Cornwall, was determined to be the first Cumberland Presbyterian circuit rider in what was then called Oregon country." Nancy Hardin Cornwall went on to have twelve children, one of whom, Narcissa, recalled her mother's will and reason when faced with death.

> We were about ten miles from the Umpqua River and the Indians living there would come and spend the greater part of the day. There was one who spoke English, and he told Mother the Rogue River Indians were coming to kill us. Mother told them if they troubled us, in the spring the Bostons (the Indian name for white people) would come out and kill them all off. Whether this had any effect on us or not I don't know, but anyway they did not kill us.... One day Father was busy reading and did not notice the house was filling with strange Indians until Mother spoke about it.... As soon as Father noticed them he got up and got his pistols and asked the Indians to go out and see him shoot.... As soon as they were all out of the cabin Mother barred the door and would not let them in any more.

Cornwall's tale—down to the tone Narcissa adopts in relating it—is not unlike those Didion has created in her novels. There is the flat affect ("Whether this had any effect on us or not I don't know, but anyway they did not kill us"). There is the somewhat ineffectual, dreamy male ("One day Father was busy reading and did not notice the house was filling with strange Indians until Mother spoke about it"). And there are the swift, instinctual actions performed by a female protagonist, which may or may not keep disaster at bay, but are performed just the same ("As soon as they were all out of the cabin Mother barred the door and would not let them in any more"). That the decision-making process is a distinctly female one in Didion's family—drawing strength, no doubt, from a belief in a religion that stressed the will—is not lost on the author, who writes:

> These women in my family would seem to have been pragmatic and in their deepest instincts clinically radical, given to breaking clean with everyone and everything they knew. They could shoot and they could handle stock and when their children outgrew their shoes they could learn from the Indian how to make moccasins.... They tended to accommodate any means in pursuit of an uncertain end. They tended to avoid dwelling on just what the end might imply. When they could not think what else to do they moved another thousand miles, set out another garden: beans and squash and sweet peas from seeds carried from the last place. The past could be jettisoned, children buried and parents left behind, but seeds got carried. They were women, these women in my family, without much time for second thoughts, without much inclination toward equivocation, and later, when there was time or inclination, there developed a tendency, which I came to see as endemic, toward slight and major derangements, apparently eccentric pronouncements, opaque bewilderment and moves to places not quite on schedule.

In short, the women in Didion's family were heroines in a real western, in which life is defined by action, and protecting one's self and one's children from "foreign" ele-

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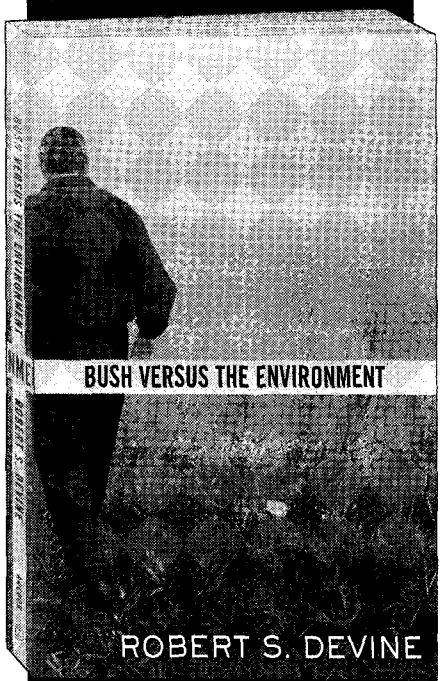

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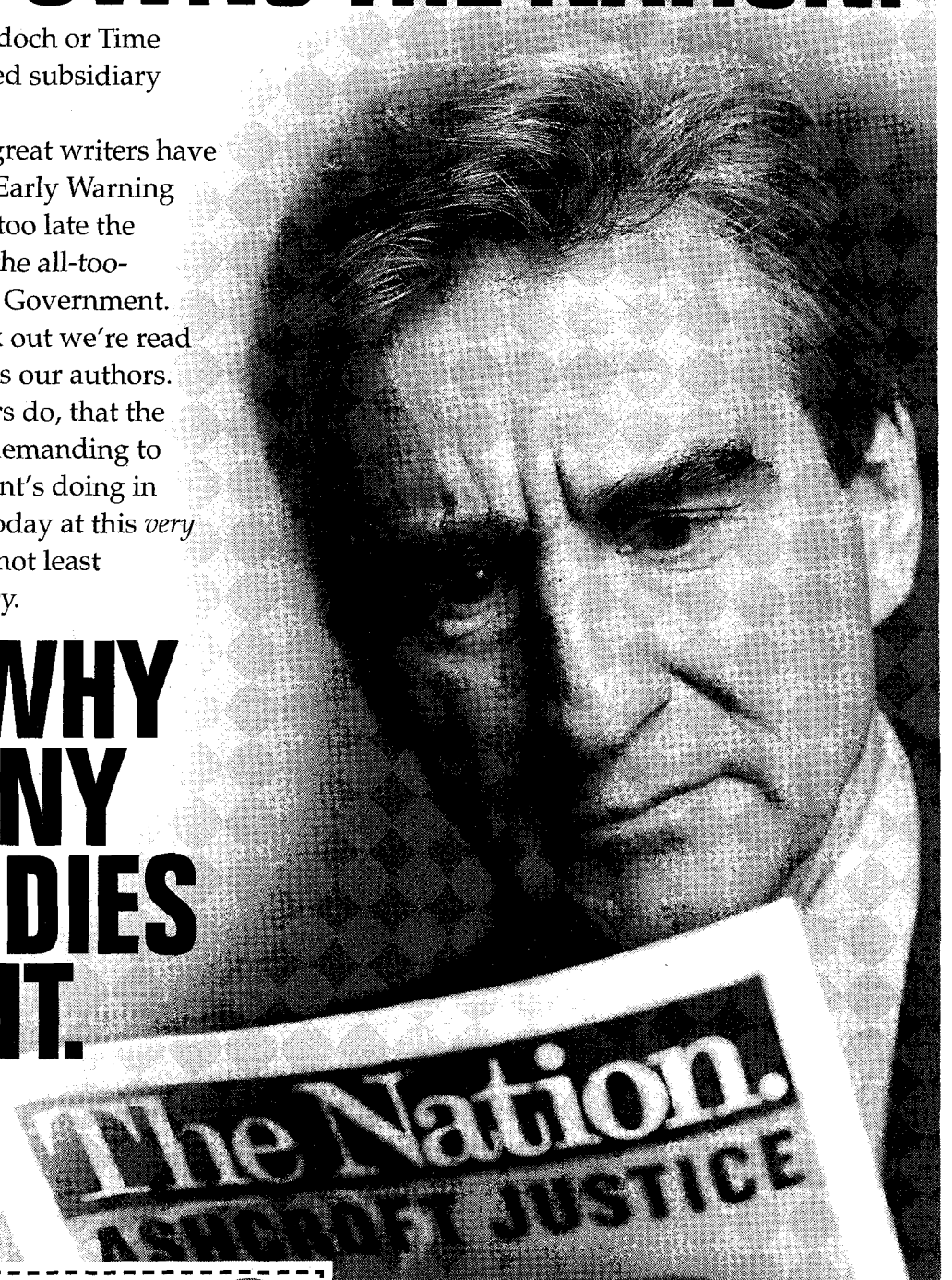

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ments, like the land's indigenous people, are the issues of the day, along with bagging dinner and planting seeds. But to what end? Does moving another thousand miles because "they could not think what else to do" define the frontier spirit? Or does the tendency to avoid "dwelling on just what the end might imply"? Can one define America as an empire built on the desire to constantly redirect one's will toward self-invention by recklessly testing the limits of the self? And what are the consequences of "jettisoning" the past? This can lead, in some instances, to an unwillingness to touch or be touched; emotional attachments are viewed as a liability, not to be dragged into the future, which is, by definition, a "free" space. It can also lead to the formation of somewhat if not entirely crackpot theories about utopian societies—Jim Jones comes to mind—which are condoned and supported by similar frontier spirits, in love with the American idea of freedom, and maybe death.

The story Didion means to tell here is the story of her own bewilderment with California and its various myths, which include the conflation of Protestant virtues like strength and will with material gain, and the various "arrival myths" she had been told. Unlike her ancestors, Didion is a writer, which means that she does have second thoughts, does equivocate and does experience "opaque bewilderment" when confronted by a story—in this instance, this story—that needs to be told, despite the difficulty she found in telling it.

In her review of *Where I Was From* for *The New York Review of Books*, the novelist Diane Johnson points out: "Essential to the core California mythology was the dream of Eldorado—the gold and treasure beyond the Rockies.... Underlying the arrival story...was the same explicit promise of freedom and opportunity, usually meaning freedom from persecution and freedom to become rich." But there was no West to "conquer," no dream to build on by the time Didion was a young woman, no template of thought and belief. California, like the rest of America, is confounding, its landscape littered with contradictions, above all the fiction of self-reliance. This fiction often breeds an extreme form of parochialism, an indifference to one's neighbors. "Not much about California, on its own preferred terms, has encouraged its children to see themselves as connected to one another," Didion writes.

> The separation of north from south—and even more acutely of west from east, of the urban coast from the agricultural valleys and of both the coast and the valleys from the mountain and desert regions to their east—was profound, fueled by the rancor of water wars and by less tangible but even more rancorous differences in attitude and culture. My mother made the trip from Sacramento to Los Angeles in 1932, to see the Olympics, and did not find reason to make it again for thirty years.

This insistence on seeing the world on preferred terms is interesting. It can and does often lead to a kind of native xenophobia—a point Didion makes in her extraordinarily well reasoned section on Lakewood, California. A "model" community built in Southern California during the postwar years, Lakewood was the fulfillment of a dream, a functioning mirage. The land, she writes, was "purchased for 8.8 million from the Montana Land Company" in 1949 by, among others, S. Mark Taper, after whom an entertainment complex in Los Angeles has been named. Like other model communities, it was designed to shut out the larger world of California, with its Mexicans and movie people and "values" that had little if anything to do with being white, middle class and preferably male.

When Didion visited Lakewood in 1993, everything it was meant to represent had eroded, largely because of another institution: the Spur Posse, a group of boys who scored "points" by sexually harassing young girls and committing other acts of random violence. The dream came to this: moments with several members of the Spur Posse captured on what passes, in the present day, for the kind of diary-keeping that Nancy Hardin Cornwall engaged in on the journey out west generations before—a television chat show.

> One of the ugliest and most revelatory of the many ugly and revelatory moments that characterized the 1993 television appearances of Lakewood's Spur Posse members occurred on the Jane Whitney talk show, when a nineteen-year-old Lakewood High School graduate named Chris Albert ("Boasts He has 44 'Points' for Having Sex With Girls") turned mean with a member of the audience, a young black woman who had tried to suggest that the Spurs on view were not exhibiting what she considered native intelligence.
>
> "What education does she have?" Chris Albert had then demanded, and crouched forward toward the young woman, as if trying to shake himself alert. "Where do you work at?"... And then, there it was, the piton, driven in this case not into granite but into shale, already disintegrating: *"I go to college."* Two years later Chris Albert would be dead, shot in the chest and killed during a Fourth of July celebration on the Pacific Coast Highway in Huntington Beach.

Another shootout, but not in a movie that John Wayne would comprehend, let alone make. This was a postmodern outlaw, attacking class and gender and race with weapons unsharpened by education or insight but by privilege, the privilege inherent in living in "tomorrow's city today."

California's preference for myth over fact has, appropriately, been reflected in its movies, an industry where myth is gospel, and language, hence thought, is looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion. The children Didion describes in *Where I Was From* are the progeny of Natalie Wood and Sal Mineo and James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, children who, at the close of the film, get lost in an ominous mansion—reflective of old California money, old California taste—that dwarfs them. When she was younger, Didion lived in one such mansion herself in Sacramento:

> We lived in dark houses and favored, a preference so definite that it passed as a test of character, copper and brass that had darkened and greened. We also let our silver darken, which was said to "bring out the pattern." To this day I am put off by highly polished silver: It looks "new." This predilection for the "old" extended into all areas of domestic life: dried flowers were seen to have a more subtle charm than fresh, prints should be faded, rugs worn, wallpaper streaked by sun. Our highest moment in this area was the acquisition, in 1951, of a house in Sacramento in which the curtains on the stairs had not been changed since 1907. These curtains, which were of unlined (and faded, naturally) gold silk organza, hung almost two stories, billowed iridescent with every breath of air, and, if touched, crumbled.

It was perhaps the memory of the golden light those curtains cast that prompted Didion to hang gold fabric across the windows of one of her first apartments in New York, where she wrote her first California novel, *Run River*. The move to New York in the late 1950s was, ostensibly, a break with the past, another move to another golden land for this woman who had yet to know or accept that she was a heroine in a postmodern western, but no matter. Writing was the great discovery, her process of intellection, the frontier.

A hallmark of Didion's five novels is

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the female protagonist who gets on a plane at a moment's notice, the female protagonist who leaves husband and child behind for another dream, the foolhardy expedition that results in mayhem, or death. (Didion's books on El Salvador and Miami reflect an interest in frontiers on the verge of collapse shortly after the dream of "progress" has been abandoned or failed to "add up.") The reporter's wanderlust, the novelist's interest in landscapes other than her own, are, in the end, Didion's inheritance:

> My mother had no interest in keeping the hill ranch [a property long in Didion's mother's family] or in fact any California land: California, she said, was now too regulated, too taxed, too expensive. She spoke enthusiastically, on the other hand, about moving to the Australian outback.
>
> "Eduene," my father would say, a remonstration.
>
> "I would," she would insist, reckless.
>
> "Just leave California? Give it all up?"
>
> "In a *minute*," she would say, the pure strain talking, Elizabeth Scott's great-great-great-great granddaughter. "Just *forget* it."

Reading this technically ambitious and emotionally expansive book, one can see that Didion and the characters she has created in her novels—women who search for landscapes they were not born to, but know in their imaginations—are the heirs of Eduene Didion, women who set out with heart and heartbreak into the great unknown. ■

The Anti-Warrior

DAN WAKEFIELD

WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN JR.: A Holy Impatience. By Warren Goldstein. Yale. 379 pp. $30.

Christianity in this country has become almost synonymous with right-wing fanaticism, conservative politics and—courtesy of Mel Gibson—a brutally sadistic version of religious experience. For Christians like me who are appalled by that distortion of our faith, the biography of William Sloane Coffin brings reassurance that not only Martin Luther King Jr. but also a white Protestant minister can become a national leader in the fight for peace, equality, healing and compassion for society's outcasts—the issues that inspired the ministry of Jesus.

As chaplain of Yale and then pastor of New York's Riverside Church, Reverend Coffin put himself and his faith on the line from the first Freedom Rides and protests against the Vietnam War to nuclear disarmament, sanctuary for Central American political dissenters and an egalitarian church policy for gays and lesbians.

In his comprehensive and compelling biography *William Sloane Coffin Jr.: A Holy Impatience*, Warren Goldstein provides abundant evidence for his claim that Coffin "became the outstanding voice of liberal Protestantism in America, one of the last unabashedly liberal voices in American public life during the ascendancy of Reagan Republicanism, the rise of right-wing fundamentalism, and the dramatic rightward shift of public policy and discourse." Coffin parlayed his pulpits, his charismatic personality and "a hunter's instinct for sensing opportunities" to get national media attention for his causes and become "a household word—indeed a religious celebrity." He even made it to the comics page, as inspiration for the *Doonesbury* campus minister, "Reverend Scot Sloane." Watching him speak at an anti–Vietnam War rally in Washington in 1968, Norman Mailer described Coffin as "hard, quick, deft and assured.... He had a voice which sounded close to the savvy self-educated tones of a labor union organizer, but there was the irreducible substance of Ivy League in it as well."

Born into an old and genteel Republican family of Presbyterians—Uncle Henry was president of Union Theological Seminary in New York—Coffin not only had an intellectual, artistic side but a natural athletic ability that made him an heir of the "muscular Christianity" that flourished at Yale in the nineteenth century. A boxer, football player and popular student at Deerfield Academy and Yale, Coffin was also a gifted classical pianist who could bang out songs at parties. "The adult Coffin persona emerged during these years: aggressive charm, physical energy, verbal facility," writes Goldstein.

Returning to Yale after nearly four years in the Army during World War II, Coffin was recruited after graduation by fellow Ivy League liberals in the CIA. Weeks before joining the agency, however, he attended a career conference for college seniors at Union Theological Seminary at the invitation of its retired president, Coffin's uncle, Henry Sloane Coffin. It was not "Uncle Henry" who persuaded him to enroll and study for the ministry but the eloquence of the activist theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (a founder of Americans for Democratic Action) and the social ministry of young Union graduates who founded the storefront churches of the East Harlem Protestant Parish. These war veterans had revolted against the complacent "Country Club Christianity" of the 1950s and showed Coffin that ministry could be "a vigorous and exciting profession." Their example overcame his objection that "the church is really irrelevant: soft face over the hard collar."

When the Korean War broke out, however, Coffin took the CIA up on its offer, and in 1951 was stationed in Munich, where he recruited and trained Soviet émigrés to infiltrate Russia as spies. Years later he reasoned (or rationalized) that leaving seminary for the CIA was "not as schizophrenic as it might superficially appear, because the difference between CIA and seminary to me in those days was not great. It was pursuing the same kind of goal of righteousness as I saw it." A CIA colleague felt he was "a Romantic" who "wanted the excitement," an assessment borne out by Coffin's choice of his code name, "Captain Holliday," after Doc Holliday, the Wild West partner of Wyatt Earp.

After several years it was clear the operation had failed—the CIA-trained spies were easily caught, their safehouse exposed and most of them probably executed. Coffin resigned in 1953 and went back to seminary, this time Yale Divinity School, where he soon was "a magnetic figure on campus...whizzing about New Haven on his powerful BMW motorcycle."

Coffin's belief that Christianity is an endless fight against all forms of injustice stirred controversy wherever he went. As chaplain of Williams College in 1957 he preached and wrote on the school integration crisis in Little Rock and brought the issue of equality home by denouncing fraternities that discriminated against Jews and blacks. His message was so effective that three students resigned their Greek membership; in retaliation,

Dan Wakefield's most recent book is Spiritually Incorrect: Finding God in All the Wrong Places *(Skylight Paths).*

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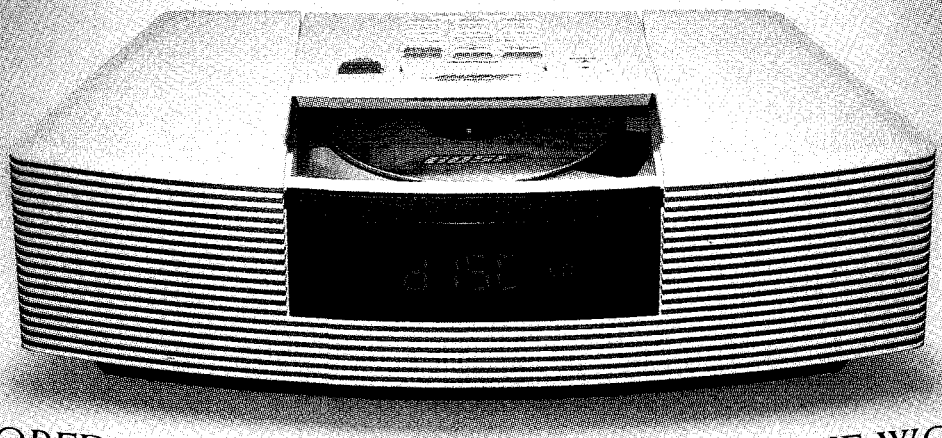

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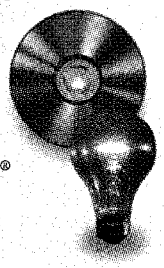

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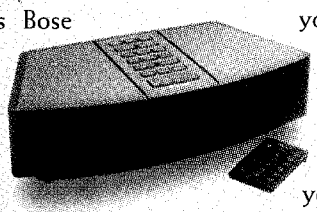

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students shattered the window of Coffin's house with shotgun pellets and set off cherry bombs in his backyard.

Coffin carried on his mission to make religion relevant as chaplain of Yale a year later, asking that "a first rate rabbi" be hired and urging university president A. Whitney Griswold to end admissions discrimination against Jews and minorities. With pressure from Coffin and the new campus rabbi, Richard Israel, more Jews entered Yale in 1962 than at any time in its history, and the percentage rose steadily before reaching its "natural" state of a quarter to a third of the student body by 1968.

In his first year at Yale Coffin wrote for *The Nation*, criticizing the "pseudo-objectivity" of liberal education, and his prayer for the incoming class of '59 foreshadowed the campus rebellions of the 1960s. He urged that students "share in the action and passion of our time" and commit themselves "to end all that is stale, irrelevant, false in our university, nation, and world."

When in May of 1961 he saw the news photos of the first Freedom Riders being beaten by angry mobs in Alabama while police stood by, Coffin recruited two white professors from Wesleyan, another from Yale Divinity school and a black Yale Law student to stage their own freedom ride to Alabama. Joined by black leaders in Atlanta, Coffin's bus rode through threatening, brick-lobbing mobs as far as the station in Montgomery, Alabama, where they were promptly arrested and spent the night in jail.

The story made front-page news throughout the country, and the *New York Times* profiled "The Bus-riding Chaplain." Coffin was "catapulted. . .into the national spotlight" and became "the most controversial white minister in the country." Outraged Yale alumni wrote that he was "beneath the level of a 'Nigger'" and suggested he "may perhaps have mulatto blood in [his] veins." Alumni complaints became commonplace as Coffin maintained his activist role—but he enjoyed the firm backing of the university president when Kingman Brewster succeeded Griswold in 1964.

Coffin continued to use his chaplaincy as a national pulpit, taking part in interfaith conferences and civil rights demonstrations throughout the country, getting arrested again in 1963 at a civil rights demonstration in St. Augustine, Florida. He appeared on television talk shows and spread his ideas through articles in national magazines—not only liberal journals like *The Nation*, *The New Republic* and *The New Leader* but *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle* and *Parents' Magazine*. In speeches and sermons around the country he argued that "property rights should reflect human rights," urged realtors to integrate offices and said "there is no such thing as inter-racial marriage, for all marriage is inter-personal."

At Yale Chapel in 1965 Coffin first spoke out against the Vietnam War, and that August he organized a group known as Americans for the Reappraisal of Far Eastern Policy (ARFEP), which, with its call for reopening the debates over recognition of China and "the broader problems of Asia," was intended, he later explained, as a "flank attack" on Vietnam. *The Nation* said the organization was "more mature [and] less vulnerable" than some New Left groups because it was "studded with well known names" like John Hersey, Roger Baldwin and Irving Howe. ARFEP was launched with teach-ins on thirty college campuses, with an estimated 25,000 students participating.

Coffin was the white Protestant voice of an ecumenical movement that made religion a force for peace, social justice and civil rights.

A month later Coffin spoke to the newly formed Clergy Concerned About Vietnam, an interfaith group that included the Jewish theologian Rabbi Abraham Heschel and the Catholic priest Daniel Berrigan. Coffin became acting secretary of its National Emergency Committee, which called for a negotiated end to the fighting and helped organize its 150 chapters in forty-three states. Like a circuit-riding evangelist preaching against the war, Coffin told church and campus audiences "this nation is separating itself from God," and he paraphrased St. Augustine in declaring, "O America, thy pride-swollen faith has closed up thine eyes." In his 1966 commencement prayer at Yale he urged his audience to "not stand comfortably aloof from the fury of our history, nor sit on little liberal fences with our fears on either side."

In his role as chaplain Coffin began counseling students who refused to serve in the war, and in 1967 he startled the nation as well as his own university by offering its Battell Chapel as "a sanctuary from police action for any Yale student conscientiously resisting the draft." Putting himself and his fellow clergy on the line, he announced that "if a further mockery of American justice is not to be made, we must be arrested too."

Raising the stakes, Coffin not only encouraged young men to resist the war at a rally on Boston Common, he also accepted the draft cards they turned in afterward at a service in the Unitarian Arlington Street church, and presented them to the Justice Department in Washington. Coffin became "the country's key religious figure on the draft and the one most trusted by young men opposed to the war." In 1968 the United States charged Coffin, Dr. Benjamin Spock and three others with conspiracy to violate the draft law. An appeals court set aside the convictions but ordered new trials for Coffin and another fellow "conspirator," though the government later "disposed of the case."

Just as Griswold had defended his chaplain against the onslaught of criticism after the Freedom Ride, Kingman Brewster shielded him during the furor over his support of draft resisters. It helped, of course, that Coffin was a war veteran and former CIA agent who "remained theologically and liturgically orthodox.... He did not smoke marijuana, experiment with psychedelic drugs, or claim to be hearing the personal voice of God," and he "continued to wear horn-rimmed (not wire-rimmed) glasses and a black robe in the pulpit."

While Brewster sometimes deplored Coffin's confrontational style (the chaplain admitted he "found it hard to resist a bit of rhetorical showboating"), he championed his work: "Thanks in large part to [Coffin's] personal verve and social action, religious life within and without the church reaches more people at Yale than on any other campus I know about."

When Coffin left the chaplaincy to become pastor of New York's Riverside Church in 1977, he continued his campaigns for liberal causes, launching a year later the Riverside Disarmament Program. Activists from churches and synagogues across the country were trained there, as Riverside played a key role in the peace movement of the 1980s, hosting meetings that organized "the largest march and demonstration in American history on June 12, 1982 as a million rallied against the arms race in Central Park."

Coffin has brought the same courage to what he has called "the most divisive issue since slavery split the church"—the question of homosexuality and gay rights. Since the early 1980s he has preached the need for affirmation of gays and lesbians as equal members of the church. "It is not Scripture that creates hostility to homosexuality," he told his congre-

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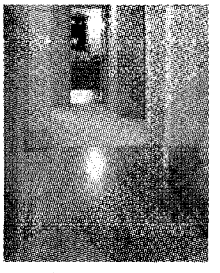

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gation, "but rather hostility to homosexuality that prompts certain Christians to retain a few passages from an otherwise discarded law code." Few Christians, he pointed out, followed the injunctions "do not plant your fields with two kinds of seed" or "do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material."

"While reaffirming the traditional Christian family," Coffin asked parishioners "to affirm all human relationships based on the Christian understanding of love and justice." The preacher, however, like others before and since (from ministers, priests and rabbis to writers and politicians), found it difficult to apply his ideals to his own family life. As Goldstein bluntly puts it, "Coffin was a marital disaster." His first two wives "faced life with a man who was emotionally sustained by his public roles—not his role as a husband, partner, or father." Still, as Goldstein points out and as history has shown from Gandhi to Clinton, the "notion that truly great leaders can combine practical devotion to family with a fully engaged public life remains a myth." With his third marriage, anyway, Coffin "found a relationship that has nurtured him happily into his old age." Having just celebrated his 80th birthday, Coffin lives in semi-retirement in Vermont, still speaking and writing, though slowed by several strokes.

Many of Coffin's messages on the issues of his heyday seem hauntingly—and disturbingly—relevant to the present moment. In his farewell sermon as pastor of Riverside Church in 1987, he said that Manhattan had become "a playground for the rich and a jungle for the rest.... In all my life, I have never seen Americans turn their backs on the poor the way they are doing today." At Yale Chapel in 1965 he offered a prayer for an end to the Vietnam War that applies to our occupation of Iraq: "Save us, O God, from all Utopian illusions, from any desire to stress the good at the expense of the possible, from any notion that any course of action would now be free of any moral distress. Save us, O God, from all vain hopes of an easy peace."

Coffin was the white Protestant voice of an ecumenical movement of courageous leaders, like Martin Luther King Jr., Rabbi Abraham Heschel and Catholic priest Daniel Berrigan, who made religion a force for peace and justice in the cause of civil rights and the ending of the war in Vietnam. Their inspiring example raises a disturbing question: Where are their counterparts now? ■

IN MEMORY

Bob and Ray

GENE SANTORO

After Ronald Reagan's death, Ray Charles's version of "Amazing Grace," one of Reagan's favorite songs, kept popping up on radio and TV. Why not? At the 1984 Republican convention, Charles sang "America the Beautiful," which he originally cut in 1972 for an album called *A Message From the People*. Then on June 10, Charles himself died at age 73 of liver problems—the final echo from seventeen years of heroin addiction in his younger days.

Brother Ray really was a Great Communicator, a shining example of pop culture as melting pot. In that way and others—his fierce individuality and self-reliance and drive to electrify mass audiences with his art—he was one of Louis Armstrong's truest heirs. Like Armstrong, Charles mingled art and entertainment so gracefully that he seduced fans into listening to stuff they never would have otherwise. And with his daring synthesis of gospel and secular music, he changed the way America sang, starting in 1955, when his leering "I Got a Woman" scorched America's airwaves and got him excoriated by churchgoers across the land for turning a spiritual into a sexual paean. Over the next few years, he forged soul music's erotic foreplay out of country-blues hollers and gospel's repentant moans and joyful cries. That made him a rebel hero to a generation of multicolored Americans.

He was as American as a taco. It's impossible to imagine what the past fifty years would sound like without him.

Born on September 23, 1930, in Albany, Georgia, and raised in tiny Greenville, Florida, Ray Charles Robinson started banging on piano at 3, at 4 saw his brother drown in the tub and went blind at 7. His tough-loving, self-reliant mother sent him to St. Augustine, to a free state school for the deaf and blind segregated by race and gender; in his eight years there he learned to play a handful of instruments. Teachers introduced him to Chopin; older kids turned him on to Art Tatum, which awakened his lifelong passion for jazz. ("I love Charlie Parker's dirty drawers," he once told James Austin—a typically pungent Charles-ism.) When his mother died, he was 14; the village matriarch shook him out of his funk and he began the itinerant musician's life. When his woman got pregnant, he moved cross-continent to Seattle (an endless procession of women passed through his life).

In 1951 he became music director of singer-guitarist Lowell Fulson's band; he'd already cut his first sides as leader imitating Nat King Cole. In 1953 he worked with the New Orleans–based Guitar Slim, whose raucous guitar and powerful singing catalyzed Charles's soul and unfettered his voice, turning him back toward the country blues and Baptist church of his boyhood.

That year, Charles signed with Atlantic Records, the hippest postwar r&b label, which tried to plug him into their winning formula—jazz musicians plus first-rate charts plus singer equals good music and hits. Despite modest success, Charles itched to take a more radical turn. You can hear him erupting into rough-edged outbursts on 1954 cuts like "Come Back Baby." But only working with his touring band could fully unleash his glorious, possessed flights. In 1955 he told Atlantic's honchos, Ahmet Ertegun and Jerry Wexler, he wanted to record live with his road band at an Atlanta radio station. They agreed. They didn't produce Ray Charles, they have said—he produced himself. "I Got a Woman" was the first result.

From then on, he pretty much ran his own show. He hired his sidemen, wrote and commissioned band arrangements, oversaw his business, owned much of his publishing rights and kept his fingers all over the Ray Charles pie. Sam Cooke was among the earliest r&b stars to follow his lead. In the early 1960s, near the zenith of his success, Charles opened his headquarters in a two-story shuttered oasis in central Los Angeles. (He worked hard to have it declared a historic landmark earlier this year.) There he zipped around corridors with the coiled intensity and barely contained energy audiences glimpsed when he threw himself around the piano stool onstage. He recorded nearly constantly, toured ten months a year and plotted his business life with the same shrewd instincts he brought to his favorite game, chess. He kept

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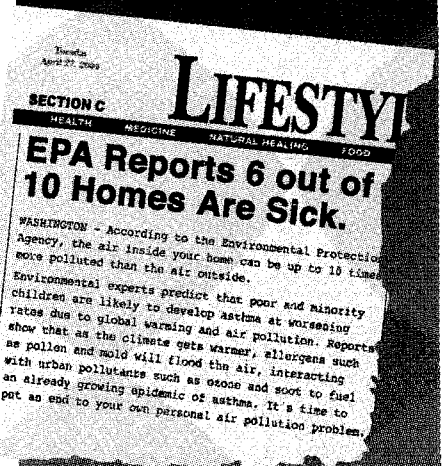
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by Allison V. Gilbreath

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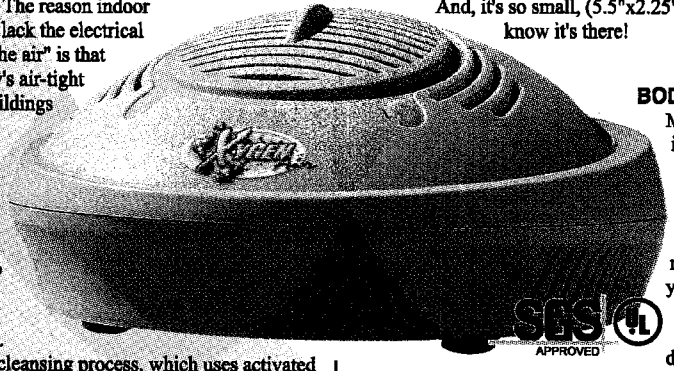

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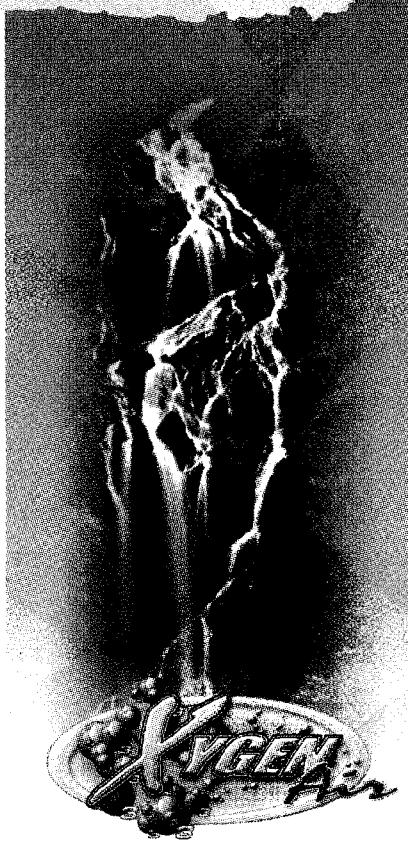

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his eye equally focused on the bottom line and artistic excellence.

His mother would have been proud. Little deterred him, because his sense of himself was so certain, his conviction in himself so powerful. He had a shrewd sense of his audience: Like Armstrong, Charles reached mainstream America while translating thousands of pages from the American songbook into his polyglot idiom. His raw, explosive vocals provided the sure touch of the unpredictable, the fervid improvisation of gospel jazz, whether backed by a funky roadhouse septet, a boppish jazz combo, the Count Basie big band or a shimmering curtain of Muzaky strings. (*Genius & Soul: The 50th Anniversary Collection*, a five-CD set from Rhino, is the best Charles overview out there.)

When the hits tailed off the touring didn't—the big band, his favorite setting, worked, as Duke Ellington's had, to pay for itself. In 1984 he re-entered the top ten singing "Seven Spanish Angels" with Willie Nelson; it was the first of many collaborations. Nelson, who wrestled with Charles at chess, once said, "With his recording of 'I Can't Stop Lovin' You,' Ray Charles did more for country music than any other artist."

Going to a Ray Charles concert was like going to church, even after the 1970s, when his machine-tooled shows often ran on autopilot. Just when you started to get bored, Charles unloosed that voice's clawing, ecstatic glory on whatever was at hand. His timing was impeccable: The audiences loved responding to his calls. With the accrued skill of a performing lifetime, Charles always acted deep in the moment. It was an awesome performance even when the shows weren't.

Sonny Rollins once told me, "Jazz isn't a thing. It's what you do." Brother Ray not only bequeathed a trove of undeniable gems; he cauterized dreck with his voice's essential honesty. "I'm a singer," he'd say when interviewers asked why he didn't write more songs. "As long as I can find songs I can do something with, I don't have to write."

A colleague wrote me the day after his death: "I spent most of the evening with Brother Ray playing and remembering: listening to him punctuate the story of his life with raunchy asides and nearly falling off his chair with laughter at his own punch lines; watching him run his fingers across his pegged chessboard and laying wily defensive traps for his opponents; riding with him in a funky old Datsun to visit his barber in Watts and then marveling at the crinkly smile lines around his eyes when he shed his dark glasses. Onstage or off, you could feel him moving to a steady heartbeat pulse, but lagging just behind the beat so it felt like each moment was both immediate and eternal. His true genius was that he could bring a song that moved him to the world and time after time after time bring the world into that song. He touched my soul, for sure, because whenever I was in his presence I was acutely aware of my own heart marking time."

The e-mails and calls about guitarist Robert Quine started the first weekend of June, after his body was found in his SoHo loft by guitar-store owner Rick Kelly. Quine was an alternative-music icon for his groundbreaking, controlled-rage guitar work with the likes of Richard Hell and the Voidoids, Lou Reed, Tom Waits and John Zorn. At age 61, Quine apparently killed himself on May 31, after months of misery following the sudden death in August of his wife, Alice, whose body he discovered in their home. He'd been using heroin and alcohol to numb the pain, until finally he ended it.

I spent a night watching *A Night With Lou Reed* (Lightyear/Warner Home Video). The sound of the band—Reed and Quine on guitars, Fred Maher on drums, Fernando Saunders on fretless bass evoking the Velvet Underground's cello—cut like a knife with a finely etched blade, its droning overtones an arabesque of structure. Quine's face might look as if he was in pain or sneering, but I know he was in his version of heaven.

Quine—even Alice called him Quine—grew up in Akron, Ohio; his uncle was the philosopher W.V. Quine. After finishing law school Robert disgustedly bailed into the world of rock guitar; his favorite band was the Velvet Underground. He shut himself up to study, went to Berklee School of Music for a semester and bailed from that too, and came to New York in 1971. In 1975 he met fellow clerks Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell at Cinemabilia bookstore; it was the birth of punk rock with a brain. These classicists loved the sneer of early rockabilly and rock and roll; their own song structures, rhythms and syncopations, sonic edges and ironies were far more complex than the word "punk" typically implies. Quine's fabled solo on the Voidoids' "Blank Generation" scraped and slurred and twisted (a favorite Quine word) James Burton and Chuck Berry into an onslaught of corrosive ire that somehow infectiously laughed at itself while sticking its tongue out at everything.

Quine was like that: a haunted, charming, funny, explosive paradox.

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"Waves of Fear" on Lou Reed's *The Blue Mask* (RCA) cemented his guitar-hero status. He told me he did twenty-odd takes until out came this tortured frenzy of whimpers—a kitten in a blender, scarifying and hilarious. Quine was terrified when he had to learn to play it onstage. For years he played in John Zorn's musical recombinations: He'd fused delay and reverb into a sound related to his friend Bill Frisell's, and he recorded edgy ambient records for his friend Brian Eno. Punk? He preferred working with singers like Matthew Sweet and Lloyd Cole and Jenny Muldaur, because he liked their songwriting and said they paid him what he was worth. He was a craftsman who spent hours and days shaping a single song's guitar lines. "I play rock and roll," he'd say with characteristic exasperation when asked why he didn't work in artier scenes.

Hanging out with Quine meant following different obsessions. He scavenged record stores to find the latest Bear Family multidisc reissues of blues, rockabilly, early jazz; to dig out Warne Marsh and Lennie Tristano, Jimmy Raney and Lester Young LPs; to search out everything James Burton or Mickey Baker recorded—an impossible task he nearly accomplished. Manhattan guitar stores were his roving headquarters; he hung out almost daily in his current fave. When fans spoke to him, he was generally very gracious, which often disconcerted them; they expected the onstage cigarette-dangling snarl.

He snarled about morons (another favorite word) but was unbelievably generous. He plied friends with books, articles, rare records and mix tapes, sat us down for hours while he played deejay with his fathomless record collection and provided brilliantly cantankerous, incisive commentary.

He was an impossibly fragile and talented intuitive musician who was driven and thorough: Before his suicide he apparently organized his estate, said goodbye to friends and left a note and a will. And he was one of the most inspiring, rigorous, and selfless teachers I've ever had. ■

FILMS

By Way of Deception

STUART KLAWANS

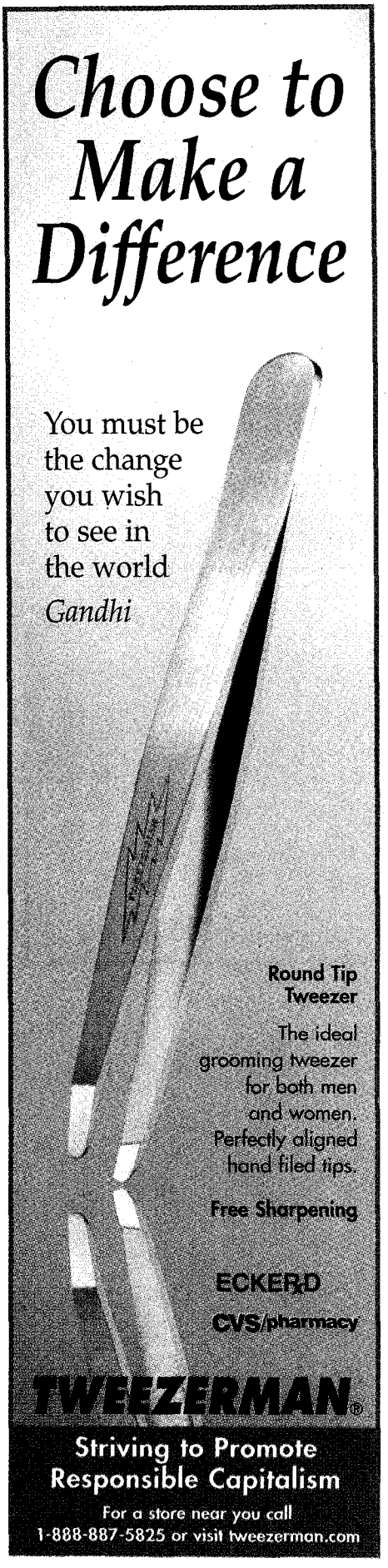
FAHRENHEIT 9/11

Not the judgment of film critics but the passage of time will decide whether Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* can change the world. Change, of course, is the whole purpose. Whatever satisfaction Moore derives from his ever-mounting income and awards, he clearly will consider this picture a success only if it helps drive George W. Bush from office. Voters will write the real review. I can merely fill time until November, with the thought that *Fahrenheit 9/11* might be interesting as a movie after it has done its work as politics.

As with any good polemic—and this is an excellent one—you sit in the theater thinking of how someone else would respond, some imaginary "undecided" in a swing state, or perhaps your Uncle Max the Republican. You don't much monitor your own reactions. But then, as you leave the movie house, you might notice that the sidewalk chatter sounds oddly muffled, the traffic looks a little blurred, as you begin to realize that your attention has not come outside with you; it's still in the dark, struggling with the feelings that *Fahrenheit 9/11* called up and didn't resolve. Are you outraged, heartbroken, vengeful, morose, gloating, thoughtful, electrified? Moore has elicited all of these emotions and then had the nerve—the filmmaker's nerve—to leave you to sort them out.

I think there are two bundles of messages in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, one political and one emotional—and while the first is about as ambiguous as a call to take up pitchforks and torches and storm the castle, the second is too complex to unsettle those in power. It works to unsettle *you*. It's what makes *Fahrenheit 9/11* a real movie.

For clarity's sake, then, let's start with the politics: the film's bill of particulars against Bush, and also against the Democratic leadership, which in Moore's view has colluded most shamefully in the misrule the world now suffers. The prologue to *Fahrenheit 9/11* revisits Bush's rise to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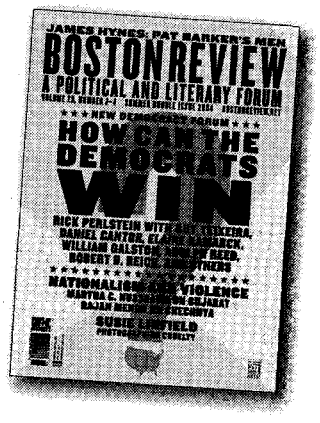

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power in late 2000, paying particular attention to the hunched posture of the Democrats who let him step on their backs. Here are Dick Gephardt and Tom Daschle, counseling "acceptance" of the non-election; and here is Al Gore, mildly officiating over the Senate session that legitimized the theft of his presidency. For the first time in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, but certainly not the last, Moore tells his story through borrowed but decidedly nonstock footage, which you most likely have not seen before—in this case, a scene of members of the House, all of them African-American, coming forward to contest the election, while Gore calmly rules their objections inadmissible because no senator, not one, would satisfy Congressional rules by signing on to them.

Moore's antagonists, being Republican, won't go so easy on him. Their attacks will no doubt include the charge that his film is Democratic Party propaganda. You should understand from the preceding the flimsiness of this accusation—although it's true that Moore spares us the sight of one notable Democrat, John Kerry, voting to authorize Bush to start a war on his own say-so, at any time that suited him.

But enough of Democratic malfeasance. Who is this Sage of Crawford, that he may choose for us between life and death? Moore answers, in part, with more footage you probably haven't seen until now: a substantial portion of videotape from the morning of September 11, 2001, when Bush and his handlers staged a photo opportunity at an elementary school in Florida. After an aide whispered to him that a second airplane had struck the World Trade Center, Bush sat in place for seven minutes, pretending to read a book titled *My Pet Goat*. Have you ever before had a chance to study his face on that morning? Has anything other than this movie made you feel the unendurable length of his inaction? What do you suppose he was thinking for all that time, as he stared into space? Moore himself asks that last question on the soundtrack, as a way of opening a biographical digression about Bush, his family and their business interests. This section of the film will particularly incense Moore's attackers, who will pronounce on him the dependable slur of "conspiracy theorist." So, to digress on my own:

Moore alleges no conspiracies. He merely says that Bush has motives beyond those he's willing to state. To make this case, Moore begins by showing that the Bush family in general, and George W. in particular, have received lavish support over the years from the Saudi elite, including the bin Ladens, and have offered valuable help in turn. Unlike the actualities footage that Moore uses in the film, these facts are by now widely known—although it was news to me that Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador, dined with Bush at the White House on September 13, 2001. In speculating about this dinner, and about the subsequent airlifting out of the United States of more than a hundred Saudis when everyone else was grounded, Moore goes only so far as to say that the overwhelmingly Saudi makeup of the September 11 attack teams could have proved embarrassing to Bush. He would not have wanted journalists just then to begin looking into his personal ties to Saudi interests, or to ask whether any useful information had emerged from the two dozen bin Ladens who had been in the country, and whom he soon spirited away without the indignity of questioning.

Nothing conspiratorial about that. The worst you can reasonably say of this section of the film is that it gives Moore the opportunity for one of his man-on-the-street pranks. He films himself and Craig Unger (author of the book *House of Bush, House of Saud*) in front of the Watergate complex in Washington, directly across the street from the Saudi Embassy: a choice of location that insures interruption. Sure enough, onto the scene drive carloads of Secret Service agents, who just want to ask, politely, why a film crew is working on this spot. The agents move off readily enough when given the answer, although one of them seems abashed when Moore blandly delivers his punch line: "I didn't realize the Secret Service guards foreign embassies."

In fact, reasonable people may find this to be the best part of the section.

You may have heard, by the way, that Moore is less of a presence in *Fahrenheit 9/11* than he was in his previous pictures. Actually, he's always with you, in voice-over; but he does perform for the camera less than usual. At times, his stunts serve to drive home a point, as when he accosts members of Congress on the street and offers them recruiting brochures, in case they want to enlist their children in the military. At other times, his antics are pure comic relief. (After complaining that the House passed the USA Patriot Act sight unseen, Moore corrects the situation by reading the bill aloud to Congress, circling the Capitol in an ice-cream truck and reciting the provisions over a loudspeaker.) Either way, though, Moore makes sparing use of this sort of material in advancing his main charges against Bush.

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The first principal accusation is that Bush had gotten along just fine with the Taliban before September 11 (which is demonstrable) and didn't much care about fighting them afterward (which is unproved but plausible). Bush invaded Afghanistan, Moore claims, because he had to be seen to do something, because the war helpfully diverted attention from the Saudis and because those closest to him would gain lucrative contracts for a natural-gas pipeline. Moore's second accusation is that Bush undertook the war in Iraq for even shadier purposes. As *Nation* readers knew, and as others have since caught on, Bush attacked without even the excuse he'd had in Afghanistan of pursuing bin Laden. There were no terrorists in Iraq to destroy, no military threats to counter—and unless you define "democracy" as the creation of profit-making opportunities for Halliburton, no process of democratization to pursue.

There is also a third principal point, most devastating of all. But before I go into that, let me digress once more, to sum up the impressively varied materials that Moore assembles to make these arguments.

The film contains, as I've said, a few of Moore's little skits, along with a lot of borrowed actualities footage, which is usually surprising and sometimes shocking. (How many shots have you seen of daily life in Baghdad immediately before the war? How many dead and wounded Iraqi civilians have you looked at close up?) In addition, you find pop-culture images, which Moore takes over for purposes of sarcasm or parody (as when he remakes the TV western *Bonanza* as the Bush adventure *Afghanistan*); talking-head interviews with expert commentators (such as former counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke, former FBI agent Jack Cloogan and Senator Byron Dorgan); a range of texts and graphics; patches of direct cinema (for example, an excursion to a shopping mall in Flint, Michigan, with a couple of Marine recruiters); and, most critical of all, filmed encounters with ordinary citizens, who pretty much have the frame to themselves while Moore stays quietly out of the way.

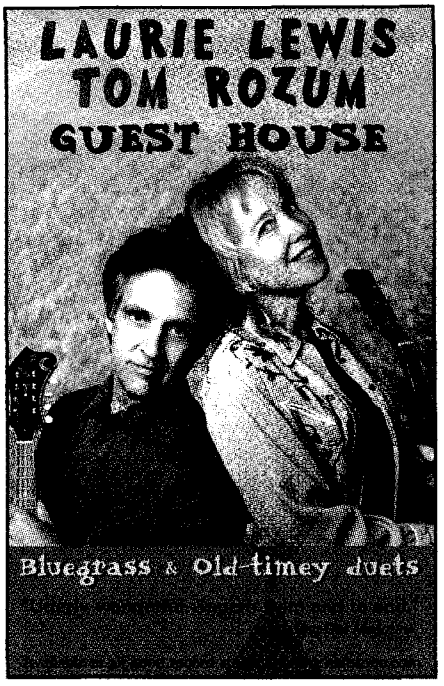
The most important of these citizens, the one who takes over the final portion of the movie, is Lila Lipscomb of Flint, mother of Sgt. Michael Pedersen, who served in a helicopter unit in Iraq and was killed in action sometime after "the completion of major combat operations." Lipscomb is a pleasantly robust woman of modest means, patriotic and Christian in convictions, guileless in manner, whose role in the polemic is simple: She is meant to embody disillusionment. Having once despised all protesters against war, feeling that they were slapping our soldiers in the face, she now grieves over a dead son, whose final letter home said of Bush, "He got us out here for nothing." In a succession of artfully spaced scenes, which constitute the film's third damning charge against Bush, Lipscomb speaks of the meager possibilities open to most young people in Flint; she recalls having encouraged her own children to enter the military, believing it to be a good thing to do and a good opportunity; and at the end, bereft, with Moore trailing behind, she visits the White House (or as close to it as you can get these days) and says she is glad to be there, since it gives her a place to put her anger.

Lipscomb makes a very efficient witness—but she is an intractably complex movie character. She just doesn't fit Moore's scheme. He generally relies on economics to explain the behavior of the elite and psychology to account for the rest of us. (As you may recall from *Bowling for Columbine*, he is very interested in the way politicians and the communications media use fear to grab attention and elicit compliance.) But when it comes to Lipscomb, Moore (to his great credit) forgets about his standard categories. For perhaps the first time in his career, he shows someone as a fully rounded personality, animated by beliefs and loyalties that he does not necessarily share but must respect; and so he allows her emotions to overwhelm his cleverness.

This is the point at which *Fahrenheit 9/11* may overwhelm you, too. Perhaps it will seem trivial to a pollster, counting and recounting those swing votes, that this campaign tool should also qualify as a work of art; but I can't believe the effect will be lost on moviegoers.

Fahrenheit 9/11 is Michael Moore's most urgent diatribe and also his best, most moving film.

Extremely Short Take: Had Moore's film not shouldered everything aside, I would have devoted several paragraphs of this column to praising *The Corporation*, a new documentary by Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbott and Joel Bakan. A study of the business corporation as the dominant institution of the past century and a half—and an analysis of the built-in qualities that make this "fictitious person" a psychopath—*The Corporation* recently opened in San Francisco and is now about to begin a New York City run at Film Forum (June 30). I think you'll find the film smart, playful, rapid and almost too richly informative. A nationwide release begins soon—a very successful one, I hope. ■



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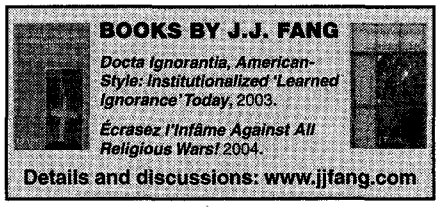
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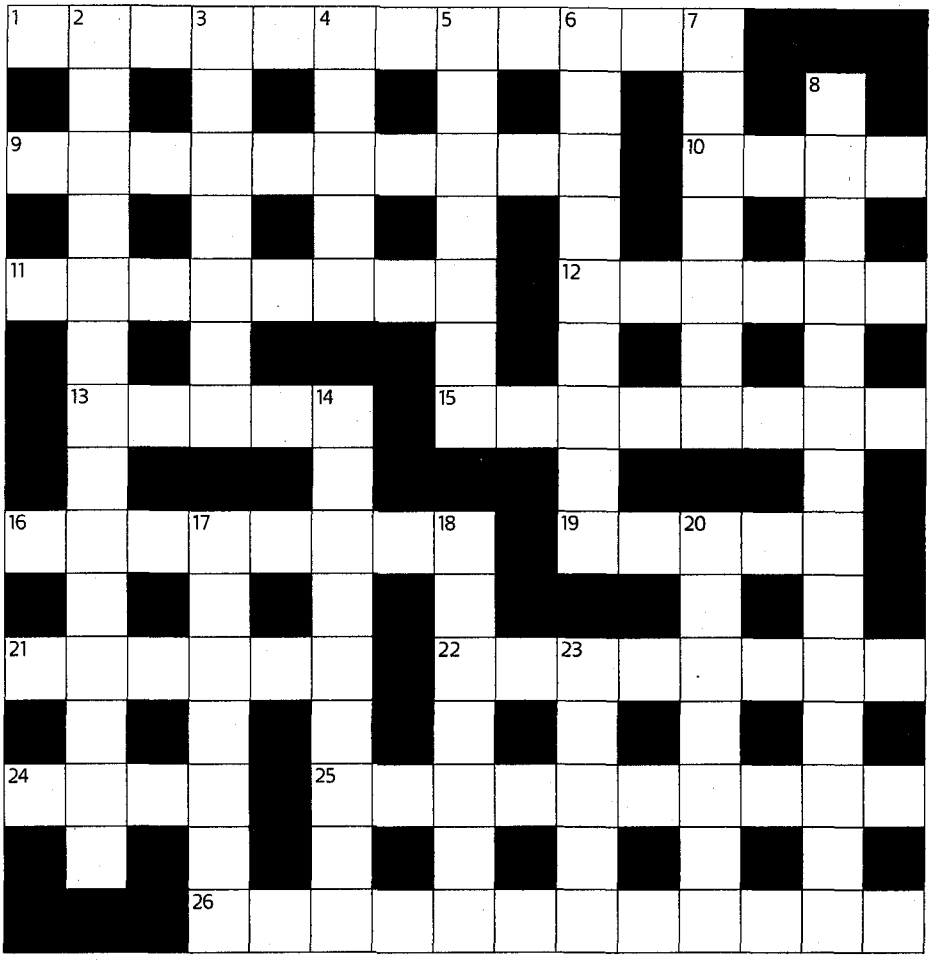

ACROSS

1 Get rid of that excess energy, as many an engine does. (4,3,5)

9 and **10** A main attraction that doesn't come back. (10,4)

11 Their picket duty might be militant, but not military. (8)

12 One had to be off the job before you can do it to a person. (In return the lady's anger finally shows.) (6)

13 Possibly played by heart, for example. (5)

15 Commonly what the dentist does sometimes when the baseball team doesn't succeed. (5,3)

16 Acted like a suitor when the old Latin type had a time, briefly, coming back. (8)

19 The would-be ice-crosser wasn't the one who wanted a room somewhere. (5)

21 A point always stated by the Germans as a way to keep something on the slow fire…(6)

22 …equal to more than a couple of asses giving away secrets at a different point. (8)

24 What a hard blow might do, coming back like crazy! (4)

25 Does ragout suit, perhaps? Such things might be given without your asking! (10)

26 They look to the future for their livelihood. (12)

DOWN

2 Well, my fine-feathered friends! They know all about you! (14)

3 Sneak a look up over a gin sling to find what is holding on! (7)

4 Is it a stroke of luck when the angler succeeds in catching one? (5)

5 Talk about having your fist doubled up in it! It's one way to make you happy! (7)

6 To finish the old city can upset the point of what might be associated with race…(9)

7 …and this guy thought the human one was growing too fast—bad French in this way. (7)

8 The reporter's work wasn't sent in on time, evidently. Bill could be rather unsettled with such! (7,7)

14 I gun a car a bit recklessly, but would have some distance to go, to drive here! (9)

17 Not quite an absence of something around the person coming out every year. (7)

18 With it one has no hope of being praised, possibly. (7)

20 I retain what might be a problem with lack of movement. (7)

23 An old Italian coin proves there's no point in starting out with a later Portuguese one. (5)

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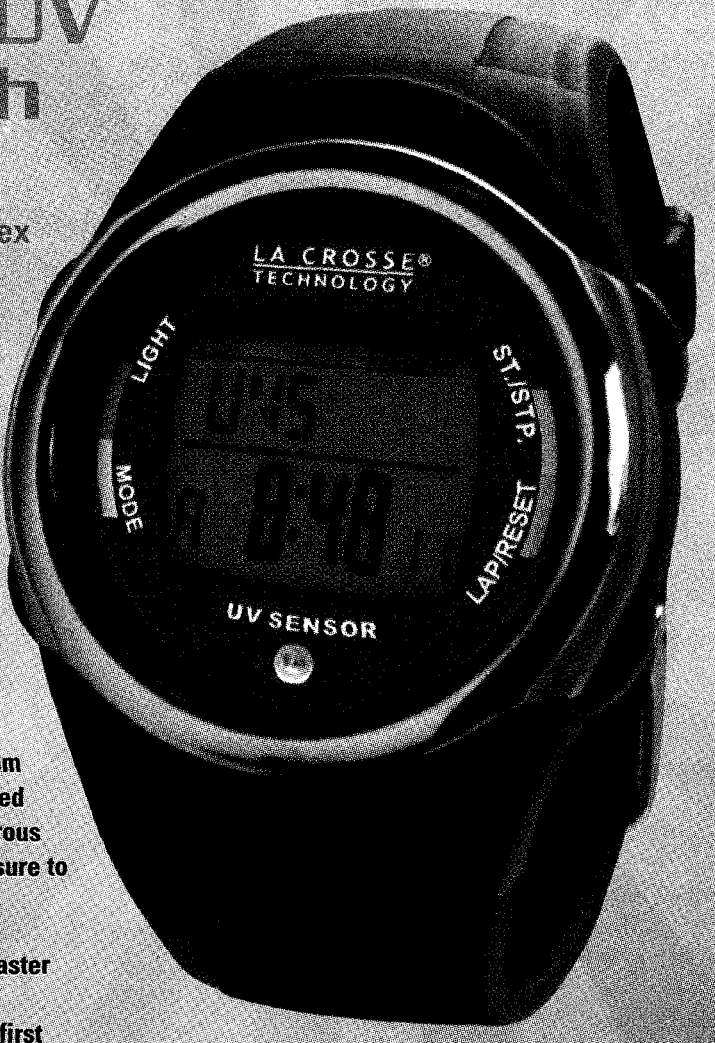
World's First UV Monitor Watch



Ultraviolet Functions

- Instantaneous and Maximum UV Index
- Upper and Lower UV Index Alarm
- UV Index Color Code

24-hour Chronograph

24-hour Chronograph Timer

Time & Date

Daily Alarm

50M Water Resistant

NOT SOLD IN STORES!

We're all concerned about the risks of UV radiation from the sun: painful sunburn, premature aging, a weakened immune system, even a heightened chance of dangerous skin cancer. It only takes a few minutes of overexposure to seriously damage your skin.

Now, UV radiation is a risk you can avoid. The UV Master Watch, using advanced technology from La Crosse Technology, the leader in atomic time, is the world's first wristwatch with a built-in precision UV sensor.

The UV Master instantly alerts you to solar UV intensity using the internationally accepted UV Index. UV Index, established by the International Commission on Illumination, represents the skin's response to the UV light spectrum. A reading of 2 indicates that minimal protection from the sun is needed, while 11 means the skin can burn in minutes. The UV Master displays solar intensity in both numbers and easy to read color-coded bar graph. An alarm even alerts you when you risk exposure to too much UV light.

The UV Master doubles as your complete sports watch. It operates in five modes: current time and date; UV Index; daily alarm; precision chronograph; and 24-hour countdown timer. Use it for any leisure activity.

UV Master

UV MONITOR WRIST WATCH

$39.95 + S&H

Promotional Code UVW-001

Please mention this when you call.

To order by mail, please call for details.

866.607.8739

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MEET the superstar neurotoxicologist who was fired from a Harvard-affiliated research center after she discovered that fluoride produced ADHD-like symptoms in rats.

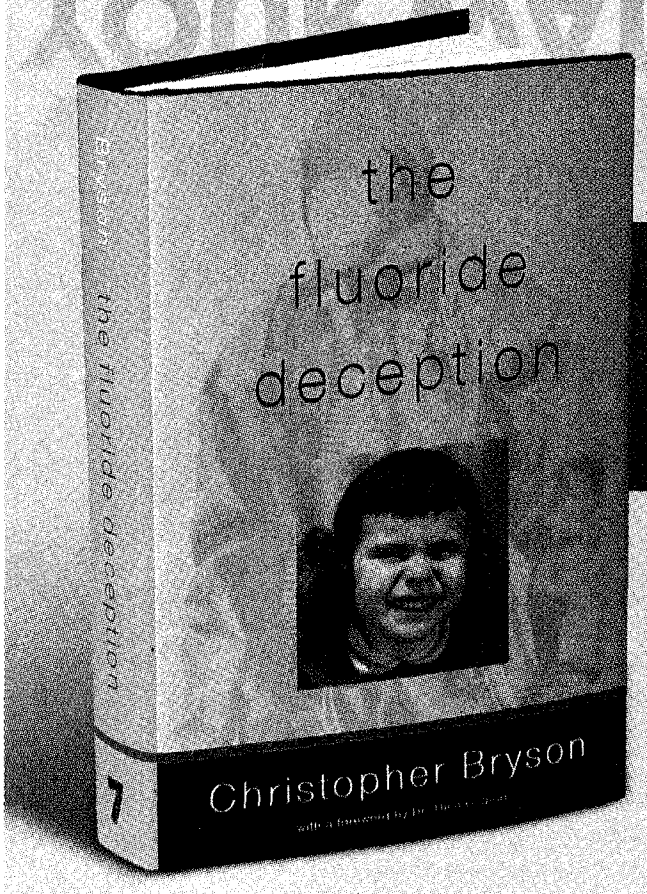
DISCOVER how the "father of public relations," Edward Bernays, notorious for persuading women to smoke cigarettes, helped "engineer consent" for public water fluoridation.

LEARN how the Fluorine Lawyers Committee, a group of corporate attorneys defending industries from charges of fluoride pollution, secretly collaborated with officials from the National Institute for Dental Research in laundering fluoride's public image.

READ how a major medical study commissioned by these industry lawyers and demonstrating serious fluoride toxicity was buried in the Kettering Laboratory archives for nearly 40 years.

SEE why 98% of Western Europe has rejected water fluoridation.

WHAT'S IN YOUR WATER?



FROM AN AWARD-WINNING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST THE AMAZING STORY OF HOW A WORKPLACE POISON WAS SOLD TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IN THE NAME OF GOOD HEALTH

THE FLUORIDE DECEPTION
By *Christopher Bryson*
Foreword by Dr. Theo Colborn
ISBN: 1-58322-526-9 | $24.95
374 pages | 30 b&w photographs

"This muckraking j'accuse… is a compelling challenge to the reigning dental orthodoxy, which should provoke renewed scientific scrutiny and public debate."
—Publishers Weekly

"The addition of fluoride to water supplies violates modern pharmacological principles… It is my sincere hope that [this] book will receive the attention it deserves and that its implications will be seriously considered."
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The irrefutable evidence of duplicity and cover-up presented in this book is hair-raising."
—Dr. Albert W. Burgstahler, emeritus professor of organic chemistry, University of Kansas

"Bryson writes with the skill of a top-selling novelist, but it was not his convincing story-telling that made me finish the book. It was the haunting message that possibly here again was another therapeutic agent, fluoride, that had not been thoroughly studied before it was foisted on the public."
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